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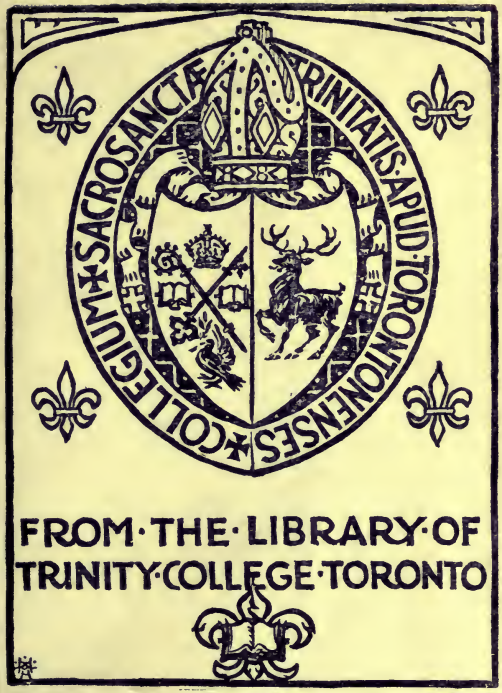

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TALES

FOR

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR CHILDREN.

THE MINISTER'S FAMILY.

BY MRS. ELLIS.

Sarah Kelly Gould
THE
Christmas
1845 to

MINISTER'S FAMILY;

Hannah Gould Johnson
February 23 OR, 1885

HINTS TO THOSE WHO WOULD MAKE HOME HAPPY.

BY MRS. ELLIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE WOMEN OF ENGLAND," "WIVES OF ENGLAND," AND "DAUGHTERS OF ENGLAND," ETC., ETC.

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THE

MINISTER'S FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

In a small, but genteel little country town, situated in a fertile, and populous part of England, lived the Rev. Joseph Middleton, the respected and worthy minister of a religion, whose principles of order, peace, and harmony, were exemplified by his whole household. It was a frequent, and familiar observation in the town where they lived, that Mrs. Middleton was always fortunate in finding excellent servants; but the secret of this good fortune was, that the servants of Mrs. Middleton were expected to be human, that they were treated kindly, and that if not exactly all their mistress could desire, pains were studiously taken to make them better in her service than she had found them. And the same system pervaded her domestic management throughout: so that when the worthy minister came home, fatigued with his pastoral duties, he was sure to find a clean hearth, with cheerful faces all around it, his favorite chair drawn out into the place he liked to fill, and such creature-comforts spread before him, as the heart of man knows well how to value—we will not say at their *true* worth.

In short, Mr. Middleton was an extremely comfortable man—comfortable in his circumstances, his

situation, his family, and his position in society; for he had almost all he desired, and his desires were regulated by a strong sense of what was reasonable as a man, and becoming as a minister of religion. The inner man? we have nothing to do with that. His preaching was approved, his advice was solicited, his society was sought, and those who might otherwise have held his profession in contempt, could not but confess that he seemed to be happy; and if to enjoy life was a proof that its duties were rightly understood, they were compelled to acknowledge that Mr. Middleton was one of the best of men.

And there grew around the minister's hearth a young and lovely family, all partaking of the same character and principles, though with certain shades of difference, which seems sometimes to puzzle the good man and his wife, as to whether they were indications of good or evil. The mother, however, generally settled it in her own mind, that if not absolutely good then, they might and would become so; and thus she often took the charge of little delinquencies upon herself, concealing from her husband, out of her very love of peace and comfort, their frequency and extent. Her daughter Sophia, the oldest in the family, had seldom been guilty of any of these startling indications of peculiarity of character. She was in all respects a child after her father's heart: serious, orderly, and apt to learn. Yet, somehow or other, the love of the mother did not glow toward this child, despite the unqualified approval she always claimed, as it did to some of the others, who were far less worthy of commendation. And the oldest boy too, though content in childhood to walk in the sober steps of his sister Sophy, was of a disposition to awaken less intense interest than his younger brother, who brought into the world with him a sickly constitution, and a tendency of mind beyond the mother's skill to control, or to direct.

But the darling of the family was little Rose, the youngest; she was so beautiful, so happy, so like a

sunbeam glancing here and there, with her light step, and merry laugh, and quick blue eye, and golden curls, and cherub mouth, whose rosy smile might have won the hoarded treasure from a miser's hand.

In order to understand the habits of the household, you should have come home with Mr. Middleton from his afternoon's walk, and have seen his daughter Sophy place before him the slippers of her own working, while James sat down to talk with his father about the grave business of the day, and Arthur closed his book, and listened, so that nothing seemed left for the mother to do, but to keep Rose quiet, and persuade her not to jump upon her father's knee before he was well seated in his chair.

We have spoken of Mr. Middleton's afternoon walk; and that he was an active and healthy man, his clear unwrinkled brow and fine complexion sufficiently attested; though he did indulge a little after dinner in a soothing nap; when his wife having sent out Rose to play, would steal on tiptoe to his side, and place her kerchief gently over his head, that no breath of air might "visit his cheek too roughly;" and then while the boys mused over their tasks for the coming day, she and her eldest daughter would sit down to their stitchery, so mute and meek, that it seemed to be their highest privilege to let the beloved one sleep on. Every hour of Mr. Middleton's life, however, was spent in what he believed to be duties; for even when he slept, he deemed that wearied nature needed such repose. Nor were his evenings seasons of idleness, or even relaxation; for after an hour spent in his study, he was in the habit of devoting another to the examination of his children in their scripture lessons. In these exercises the older ones took a deep and lively interest. But, alas for poor Rose! Even so far as her young attention was required, her answers were about as wide of the mark, as they would have been, had she replied to a question in arithmetic, that the flower she had planted was the fairest in the whole garden.

Mr. Middleton used to frown upon his child when she gave these random answers; Sophy used to reprove her more sharply; the boys used to smile, despite their natural tendency to look grave; and the mother used to whisper in her ear what she ought to have said; and all the while the little wicked one used to seem as if she had quite as much pleasure in being wrong, as right.

The fatigues of the day being ended by the accustomed services of family devotion, and Mr. and Mrs. Middleton preferring to share every indulgence with their children, the supper tray, simply furnished, used to be brought in; while Mr. Middleton, who lived upon a peculiar system of diet, under the direction of an eminent physician, took only biscuit and brandy-and-water, which his daughter Sophia used to place on the table beside him.

While the boys ate their bread and cheese, little Rose, whose presence at supper was allowed to be by sufferance only, and not by right, partook of whatever might be upon her mother's plate; and by way of heightening the indulgence, the last portion in her father's glass, well sweetened, was always handed to her, while she laughed, and clapped her hands, and exhibited every demonstration of delight, because it was only when she had been especially good, or as an act of unmerited favor on the part of her father, that this indulgence was granted her. Thus, in her ideas, and in those of her sister and her brothers, the privilege of partaking of the evening glass of health and comfort, was associated with thoughts of domestic enjoyment, of parental approbation, and of family devotion. Was it a singular, or uncommon case?

Among the many respectable neighbors who exchanged occasional visits with the Middletons, none were on more intimate terms than the Widow Clement, and her children. Though well known to the minister as members of his congregation, it was not until the sudden death of Mr. Clement, that a

closer bond of union had been entered into, originating most probably in the desolate situation of the widow, the responsible charge which devolved upon her in the care of her two children, and the need she often experienced of friendly counsel and Christian sympathy.

"You don't know where we are going," said Mrs. Clement to her son Morris, one lovely summer's morning, "or I am sure you would not look so unwilling to accompany us."

Morris looked up with an expression of inquiry. He was a beautiful boy, such as any mother might well have been excused, had she felt proud to call her own; and there is little doubt but Mrs. Clement had her full share of these feelings; for though a serious and well-meaning woman, much changed since her husband's death, and having, as she believed, renounced the world and its vanities, she was still under strong temptation to yield herself to another world, and a different order of vanities in connexion with it.

If, however, Mrs. Clement was proud of her son; if she was ambitious with regard to his prospects in life, she soothed her conscience by a total exemption from these feelings in relation to her daughter, a quiet retiring little girl, about two years younger—a girl whom nobody noticed, or recollected to have seen; and whom ever her mother appeared at times to forget. What could be the reason why nobody attached themselves to Ruth Clement? She was not plain-looking; she was never obtrusive, nor out of her place. She had a sweet voice, and she was very kind; yet nobody valued her; and the remark, "It was only Ruth," sufficiently denoted the degree of general esteem in which she was held.

On the bright summer's morning we have spoken of, when Morris was so reluctant to accompany his mother, Ruth was ready as usual, and stood patiently waiting the result of the variety of indirect means which Mrs. Clement usually employed, to produce an impression upon her son.

"Perhaps you don't know," said Mrs. Clement, with a look which indicated her being in a capacity to hold out a bribe—"perhaps you don't know that we are going to Mr. Middleton's."

"And that's one reason why I don't wish to go," replied Clement; "for he always questions me in my Greek verbs."

"But I want to talk to him myself to-day," observed the mother; "and, while we are engaged, you and Arthur, and little Rose, can play in the garden."

At the name of Rose, the countenance of Morris brightened; for she was not only a favorite in her own family, but in many others; and all the way that he walked with his mother that morning, he was making up a nosegay for his little friend, though he took the precaution to make his sister run and fetch him all the flowers.

It was a distance of about a mile from the farm-house where Mrs. Clement lived, to the town, at the outskirts of which stood the residence of the Middletons; one of those neat little compact-looking houses, which are approached through a narrow plot of garden-ground, with a weeping-willow on one side, and a laburnum on the other; while through a kitchen-window, a little raised above the level of the gravel-walk, the servant-maids peep up to see who it is that rings the bell, or knocks at the handsome front door.

Ruth Clement was accustomed to enter this house with a feeling of respect proportioned to the superiority of its general aspect to her own home, though in what this superiority consisted, it would have been difficult to say; unless it were in a variety of modern furniture, in handsome stair-carpets, and in a certain townishness of look, which her young fancy imagined must be a look of greater gentility. Some persons, and those of no mean taste, would greatly have preferred the farmhouse at Fearnfield; for there, embowered in rich woods, rose the ancient chimneys

from a long low roof, over one part of which hung festoons of wreathing ivy, while honeysuckle and roses from below climbed up, until they reached the latticed windows of the highest story; and when Ruth looked out in the early morning, she could reach, with her slender arm, the delicate rose-buds, and gather them in while yet the dew was upon their leaves.

It is true the farmhouse was deficient in many of the elegancies of polished life. It had no carpet on its old oak stairs, and the dark panelling of the wide low rooms, gave them somewhat of a sombre character, not altogether at variance with the natural mind of Ruth, who was a little too apt to dream away the twilight hour, while seated with folded hands in silence on a little stool at her mother's feet. From these reveries, she was, however, accustomed to be rather sharply roused, and often chidden in no very gentle accents for that idleness, which Mrs. Clement always complained of as her daughter's besetting sin. The truth was, she liked an active character, and the restless vivacity of Morris suited her far better than the quiet and thoughtful habits of her daughter Ruth.

The reward for which Morris stipulated with his mother when he consented to go with her, was, that she should ask for Rose to come back and spend the day with them; and as Mrs. Middleton was expecting visiters who would claim much of her attention, she readily consented; while the little favorite, excited beyond all bounds at the prospect of so much enjoyment, would scarcely allow herself time to be dressed for the occasion. With the same bounding and excessive joy, she flew over the fields, a hand on each side held by Ruth and Morris, until her little feet were absolutely so weary, that she declared she could not stand; and then Ruth was asked to carry her the rest of the way; for though Morris first lifted her from the ground, and bore her a few yards in his arms, he did not like it quite so well as he thought he should, and therefore the pleasure was the more willingly resigned to Ruth.

Poor Ruth! it was a sad sight to see her flushed face and straining limbs, as she struggled under a burden almost as heavy as herself, sometimes resting for a few moments on a bank, and then trying to adjust her load so as to get on a little quicker; and a mother's eye ought to have seen and noticed her oppression. But Mrs. Clement was considerably behind, and neither Morris nor Rose seemed to have the least idea of their own injustice.

Arrived at the old farmhouse, a scream of exultation burst from the lips of Rose, who now found that she could run about as well as ever; for there were young ducks, and chickens, and all sorts of living things, with which she filled her apron, and scampered about, despite their smothered cries, and the earnest entreaties of Ruth, that they might be restored to their disconsolate mothers. The arrival of Mrs. Clement, however, soon brought with it a certain degree of order, for though tolerant in the extreme to the faults of at least one of her own children, she was, in other respects, strict and sometimes severe in her domestic discipline. Indeed, the serious charge with which she was left, required that she should be so; for it was often observed of the Widow Clement, that a less managing woman could not have carried on the extensive business, and overruled the many servants which belonged to the farming establishment at Fearnfield—a business which, since the time of her husband's death, she had contrived to manage unaided, except by the experience of an old and trustworthy servant, who had long lived upon the farm. Nor was it uncongenial to the temper and disposition of Mrs. Clement, to feel that she had affairs of moment depending upon her, and that she exercised over others the right and the power to rule. It had often been suspected, during the lifetime of her husband, that he was the weaker partner; and Ruth, in her infant tenderness, had often felt that there were softer features in her father's character, than she found in that of her remaining parent. In

short, Mrs. Clement was a strict disciplinarian, and though dependant upon her friend the minister for his spiritual advice, if ever she appealed to him on temporal matters, it was evidently with a desire to be approved in what she had done, rather than directed in what she might do for the future.

Thus the two families grew up, exchanging offices of kindness with each other; while the younger branches of each became more closely united by a similarity of age and circumstance, by their frequent social meetings, as well by the fact of Sophia Middleton, who was the instructress of her sister Rose, having offered to confer upon Ruth Clement also the benefits of her tuition. Ruth, therefore, was sent, once or twice a week, to gather what instruction she could from this uncertain source; for though her mother saw the importance of bestowing upon her son an expensive education, she persisted in declaring that her daughter could not oftener be spared from her domestic avocations; and even on the days when she was absent, Mrs. Clement bitterly lamented the hardship of being deprived of her services at home.

Under the more favorable circumstances which dawned upon his early years, Morris Clement grew up to the verge of manhood, as handsome and as fine a youth as his fond mother could desire; for fond she really was, and almost weak on this most vulnerable point of her nature. Perhaps it was that every woman's heart has its soft part, if we could but find it. Perhaps it was that Morris Clement, with his high and manly bearing, his quick talents, his lively temperament, and the clear fresh beauty of his fair brow and healthy cheek, was altogether a living picture of the bright ideal of what his mother's proud heart had often dreamed he might be, yet scarcely dared to hope he would; so trembling had been her apprehensions lest some stain of sickness, or cloud of sorrow, or spot of earthly blight, should fall upon the lovely vision, which was alternately the object of her fear, and of her hope. Now, however, the

entire fruition of her soul's desire appeared about to be realized. Clement came home from school, where he had been placed under the care of an excellent master, with his health confirmed, his mind matured, his manners polished, and his whole character improved by what, if it deserved not the name of personal religion, was at least a tendency to respect the religion of others, and a willingness to join his mother in those religious duties and associations to which she was increasingly inclined.

What then could be more delightful to Mrs. Clement, than to walk through her own fields—perhaps more especially through the streets of the town of ——, occasionally exchanging a smile and a nod of recognition with other mothers of her acquaintance, while she leaned upon the arm of this beautiful and manly youth, whose respectful behavior to herself was not the least cause of her triumph and her joy. Even when passing along the aisle of the place of worship where she was accustomed to attend, it would have been difficult to discover whether more of pride or of gratitude was glowing at her heart: and when the good minister glanced toward her seat, she too looked aside at the face and figure of her son, as if he alone could afford either interest or attraction.

And in all these feelings Ruth went along with her mother. In her intense love, and profound admiration of her brother, she had indeed no equal; but in proportion as her mind was more deeply influenced by thoughts of a simple and yet serious character, Ruth loved him in a different way, for her young heart yearned over him with an inexpressible tenderness, that he might be led in the way of true wisdom, and find that her paths were those of "pleasantness and peace."

The minister's family were all sensible of the merits and attractions of Morris Clement. Between him and Arthur, who was nearest his own age, a strong intimacy had been contracted though it is probable that like many other intimacies, it owed

its birth to circumstances, rather than to sympathy of mind and feeling. Indeed, a stronger contrast could scarcely be presented, than that which existed in the persons of these two boys. Arthur Middleton was dark, and pale, with a heavy abstracted look, as if he walked through the world neither attracted nor interested in what it offered to his view. It was only common and slight observers, however, who formed this opinion of the studious boy; for those who knew him better, were sometimes witness to an expression of his countenance, a flashing of his deep dark eyes, an energy—a stirring up, as it were, of his whole being, which was perfectly startling to those who had only seen him poring over the works of his favorite authors, or diving into the mysteries of that abstruse lore which threatened to absorb his whole nature, if not to undermine the strength of a constitution, by no means vigorous or robust. It seemed, therefore, to his father, to afford a happy and necessary relaxation to his son, when Morris Clement could beguile him from his books, while the playful wit, easy address, and ready adaptation to persons and circumstances, in which Morris so much excelled, seemed equally likely to produce a desirable effect upon the manners and habits of the young student. There were, however, depths in the heart of one, into which it would have been impossible for the other to penetrate. The sphere of thought in which Arthur revelled, was one which belonged to the past, rather than to the present—to principles, rather than to things—to eternity, rather than to time. And therefore he was silent, and abstracted, and heeded little who or what might be passing around him. The sphere to which Morris directed his attention, was the world, as it is—society, business, politics, and even religion, as it formed a link of connexion between many of these familiar things. Therefore it was that he was affable, unembarrassed, easy, fluent, and somewhat precociously conversant with the affairs of every-day

life. Surely nothing but chance or accidental circumstances could have bound two such characters together. Yes, there was another tie—Morris, with all his liveliness, and observation, and good sense, wanted somebody to talk to—Arthur, with all his deep thoughts, and unshared feelings, wanted somebody to love.

But the time was now come when this strange intimacy must be broken. Morris Clement had received too good an education for a farmer, bnt still it seemed desirable that he should choose a business—or as we must now call it—a profession, with which farming might be connected. He therefore made his selection, and a bachelor uncle, who was joint executor with his mother, came over to Fearnfield in due form, to consult and decide upon the destination of his hopeful nephew. Many inquiries had been made by the widow and her friends, and among other situations proposed to her choice, there was one in London which offered peculiar attractions both to the mother and the son: to the mother, because the terms were reasonable; and to the son, because he believed the metropolis was the only theatre for the full exercise of talents like his own.

When the grave uncle came, however, he prudently refused to listen for a moment to the reasoning of his nephew in favor of a town residence; but when Mrs. Clement stated the terms on which her son would be taken, and the advantages he would be likely to derive, the man of business gained the ascendency, and he listened more and more, and smiled with a sort of internal consciousness of satisfaction, which afforded to the youth so strong an evidence of his hopes being about to be realized, that he wisely kept silence, in the fear that any further exhibition of earnestness on his part would hinder, rather than promote his object.

All this while, Ruth had been sitting on the stool at her mother's feet, and listening most attentively to what was going on. One strange omission she

had observed in these calculations, which struck her so forcibly, that at last she could not hold her peace; and speaking very meekly, yet very earnestly, she asked her uncle, if the gentleman under whose care her brother was about to be placed, was a religious man.

"Why no, child," replied the uncle, "I never heard that he was, but you know your brother does not go to him to learn religion; he goes to learn a business." And the speaker laughed, and rubbed his hands, as if he had said a very clever thing.

"Mr. Middleton told us in his sermon on Sunday," observed Ruth, "that religion was the one thing needful, and that we should seek that before all others."

"Child," said the uncle, now looking very grave, "I don't see why you should meddle in these matters, and dictate to those who are older than yourself."

"But"—began the persevering Ruth, when suddenly a sharp pinch on the back of her neck from her brother, who had crept up beside her, made the blood rush to her face, and the tears start into her eyes.

Ruth, however, cared little for her own bodily suffering, in comparison with what she apprehended for her brother; and she therefore ventured to speak again, alluding in strong terms to the accounts she had heard of the dangers of a London life.

"You talk very strangely," said the man of business. "Who can have told you of these things? I should rather have expected to hear of them from a young man of the world, than from a serious modest little girl. Let me tell you, though there is much evil in London, there is also much good; and your brother will have the unspeakable advantage of attending the ministry of some of the most gifted and popular preachers of the day."

"I daresay that will be a great pleasure to him,' observed Ruth, "and it may be a great advantage but, at home, uncle? What will he be likely to meet with at home?"

"Not his mother's watchful care, certainly," replied the man of business again; "but we must hope for the best; and I believe he goes better fortified than most young men, by the excellent lessons he has already learned."

"And is not religion the one thing needful, then?' asked Ruth again.

"Why yes, child, to be sure it is."

"And will not my brother be asked after his death, whether he was a good Christian, rather than whether he was a good engineer?"

"Nonsense! child, how strangely you talk."

"I talk, I believe, as I have learned from my bible; and I do not find there, that a young man should be sent to the cleverest master at the lowest price, whether that master be a Christian man or not."

Before Ruth had finished this sentence, she was put down by general acclamation, so strong was the feeling of those who heard her, against what they considered the impertinent interference of an ignorant young girl, incapable of judging of the case, and possessed with those strange ultra views, which, however appropriate they might be to the preacher in the pulpit, were in no way applicable to the worldly affairs of ordinary life. It was therefore considered perfectly right that so inexperienced a meddler should be put down, and Ruth was so accustomed to be silent, to be disappointed, defeated, overborne by others, that she meekly fell into her most frequent and familiar mode of conducting herself under such circumstances—that of tacit submission, and uncomplaining regret that she had not the power to impart her own strong convictions to the minds of others.

There were perhaps more reasons than Ruth was aware of, why her mother should seek a situation for her son, which at once combined strong recommendations in a worldly point of view, with moderation in the way of present expenditure; though there could be no reasons sufficiently cogent to justify a

religious professor in sacrificing to these considerations, the spiritual and eternal interests of her child. Still Mrs. Clement was sorely straitened between her pride and her profession; and though she persuaded herself again and again, that by living in London, her son would enjoy religious advantages not to be met with elsewhere, the words of her daughter had struck upon her ear like an echo to the secret convictions of her own heart; and the pain with which they were first heard was increased by remembrance, just in proportion as her convictions were made to give way to views of worldly aggrandizement for her son.

Oppressed with these considerations, the Widow Clement, instead of acting a straightforward, honest, and decided part, honest to her own conscience, and decided as to the future conduct of her son, repaired more frequently than ever to the house of the minister for advice. For advice, did we say? No, never let that be called advice, which is only asked for to sooth, not to direct; and which is only obtained by partial statements, and by studiously keeping back what would at once bring down the strongest condemnation upon the deceiver, if revealed. Yet, how often is this called asking advice—going to the good and the friendly with a half-told story, making out a fair case, and in fact, purchasing their approbation, by a meanness which is beyond a name; and then taking home their sanction, acting upon it, as if it imparted a right to do wrong, and having done so, perhaps boasting of that sanction to the world.

In justice to Mrs. Clement, however, it must be added, that she was not so much in the habit of deceiving others, as herself; and that while she told her own tale to Mr. Middleton, she actually persuaded herself at the time, that the tone she gave, and the coloring she threw over it, were such as were warranted by truth. She only forgot to turn the picture, and to show the opposite side.

Notwithstanding all this caution in the opening of

her affairs to Mr. Middleton, the good minister could not always full approve, or even understand, the views of his neighbor the widow; and a shake of the head, or a doubtful response, were frequent indications to her that his approval was not so complete as she had wished.

"I want you to send your little girl more frequently to our house;" he would often say, "That child has so few advantages, and she might just as well be learning with Rose as not. My daugher Sophia is an admirable instructress; but really her pupil is so wild, and thoughtless, that unless we could find some way to keep her steady, I don't know what will become of her. Now, your girl is the very person we want—so thoughtful, and so quiet."

After these conversations, Ruth was generally sent more regularly for a while to attend to her lessons; but an accumulation of household duties soon again detained her at home, and her education was easily made to give way before more immediate claims upon her attention.

Mr. Middleton was perhaps the better able to sympathize with the Widow Clement in her anxieties about her son, from the circumstance of his own two boys having about the same time had to choose their destination in the world, or, in other words, to submit to the choice of their father. James the oldest, had, during the past year, been apprenticed to a respectable and flourishing tradesmen; and Arthur, whose character and tone of mind unfitted him in almost every respect for the active and stirring affairs of worldly men, had declared his preference for the ministry; and with the view of completing his preparation for that important office, had been sent to an establishment in a neighboring town, where his studies were more likely to be regularly and successfully pursued.

Sophia and Rose Middleton were therefore all of the minister's family who now joined their parents at their social board, and filled up the narrow circle

around their cheerful hearth; for cheerful it still was, though the voices were so few whose lively tones were heard to tell of the comfort of domestic love, and fireside peace. And little Rose was still the favorite, or she never would have been forgiven half the unruly tricks, and strange doings, to which her wayward fancy prompted her. But she had learned that wicked lore which comes too soon and too aptly to woman's understanding—she had learned that a dimpling smile, a pretty attitude, a graceful turn, a voice with music in its tone, could serve her purpose more effectually than the profoundest argument, and win for her many a disputed point, in which a wiser woman, destitute of the power and the blandishment of beauty, would have failed. It was thus that Rose Middleton, though often sorely chidden by her strict and harsh-judging sister, though severely lectured by her father, and only to her mother's bosom pressed with uniform and unfailing delight, was still capable of exercising a kind of mastery over those sterner natures, whose sincere approval she seldom strove to win. However culpable she had been throughout the day, Rose knew well that the evening hour brought with it a feeling, a tenderness, a gathering home as it were, of the harvest of affection, out of whose fulness she trusted to partake; and therefore, when their family devotions were closed, and the good man of the house had partaken of his evening glass—when the kind glance was in his eye, the smile upon his lip, and the glow at his heart, then were the gentle arms of the beautiful Rose entwined around her father's neck, her golden locks upon his cheek—his shoulder—his breast; and her blue eyes looking up into his face with an expression that was ready, on the slightest relaxation of his, to burst forth into a merry laugh, while she claimed his fondest kiss, along with the last and sweetest portion of his evening draught.

It was a strange intimacy, that which knit together in a girlish friendship two such different natures as

those of the being we have just described, and Ruth Clement, the widow's neglected child; yet, of all those whose severity was softened, or whose dignity was made to yield by the influence of Rose, Ruth Clement was the most subservient to her wishes, where conscience was not concerned; and perhaps, in reality, the most attached to her person. It was therefore a double pleasure to Ruth to go over to Mr. Middleton's to learn her lessons, and to spend the day with her little friend; and often when the hours of school discipline were over, they used to wander in the fields together, gathering wild flowers, or blackberries, or moss, of which, however, Ruth was invariably both the gatherer and the bearer; though her share in the possession of such treasures was always very doubtful, and often very small.

In this manner, the autumn, the winter, and the spring passed away; and when bright summer came again, and the cheerful holydays returned, the parents of both families looked forward with no ordinary degree of expectation, to their circles being once more for a while complete.

The first of the absent youths to meet the welcome of his home was Arthur Middleton; and instead of one year only having passed, it seemed as if five at least had rolled over him since he last trod upon the threshold at his father's door.

"You are so altered!" exclaimed Rose, regardless of the delicacy of a first interview—"so altered, I am quite afraid of you."

"I must be altered indeed," said Arthur, laughing, "if my appearance produces that effect upon you; but where is my mother?" and he rested not, nor amused himself by the way, until he had paid the most dutiful and affectionate respect to his parents, and received from them that welcome for which his heart had long been yearning. Next to his sisters, the servants of the household claimed his attention; and then every plant that grew in his father's gar-

den, and every animal which shared in his protection; as if he could not fully assure himself of the reality of his enjoyment, until each well-known and familiar object had been seen and recognised again. Such is the returning home of unsophisticated youth —such the glow of the fresh warm heart toward childhood's associations, when it counts over again the many items in that treasury of early love, compared with which the wealth of after years is poor indeed.

Still Arthur Middleton was changed—so changed that, but for these involuntary gushings of affection, he might have been supposed to have assumed another nature than his own. He was taller, paler, more delicate, and his deep dark eyes were even more flashing than they had ever looked before; but that was not the kind of change which his sisters vainly endeavored to describe to each other, when they retired to their own room that night. The truth was, the young student, whose mind had hitherto been locked in secret communion with the dead of past ages, had now been brought into living and breathing fellowship with spirits ardent as his own; whose race was toward the same goal, and whose career was at once as laborious, and as rich in promise, as his own. Even more than this had been his experience. His hidden soul had found a voice. A strange wild eloquence, almost as startling to himself as to his superiors and his compeers, had accompanied his first efforts at communicating his thoughts to others. Some had ridiculed, and some had wondered, at the unusual display of forcible ideas, poured forth, as it were, in a torrent without method, and beyond all mastery of rule; but not a few had augured from the young speaker's first commencement, a brilliant and extraordinary career.

Such, then, was the change which a single year had wrought in the character of Arthur Middleton. He had discovered that he had talent, and what that talent was—that he was no longer a mute recipient

of the sentiments and opinions of others; but that he too could command his listeners, and rivet their attention, and awaken their sympathies, making them go along with him into the heights and the depths of his own feelings, through the exalted paths of philosophy and science, and further, and higher still—as far and as high as the mind of man can ever penetrate—up to that ineffable Fountain of all wisdom, before which the angels veil their faces, as if unable to look, or to comprehend, the excellence of that glory.

It was happy for the young student that his mind could be thus filled with a consciousness of its own power, without the sacrifice of his simplicity; and that he could live in a region of intellectual enjoyment, without paying that bitter penalty of ceasing to find enjoyment in common things. It is true he was often absent, when a more ordinary man would have been attentive. It is true, he often appeared lost—rapt—nay, even stupid to the common observer; but the perfect good humor with which he bore the raillery which such evident wandering of thought brought upon him, more than redeemed his conduct from the offence it might otherwise have given. Thus, though the conscious possessor of a power, which, perhaps, more than all others, imparts a feeling and a knowledge of influence over others, the wonder-working power of eloquence, Arthur Middleton was capable of entering with unabated pleasure into all the simple and common-place enjoyments of his home; and even when he played with his sister Rose, her girlish folly, and the utter absence of reasoning and calculation which her general conversation betrayed, neither called forth one angry reproof, nor awakened even an expression of contempt. Indeed, there was too much of tenderness, and too much of love, intermingled with his nature, to permit him to be harsh or impatient with any one. A strong deep indignation he was capable of feeling against the oppression of the innocent, or

the injury of the helpless; but this only gave a thrilling energy to his eloquence, and a fire almost like lightning to his eye, without awakening thoughts of bitterness or revenge against the aggressor.

Such then was Arthur Middleton after his first absence from home, and with such feelings, excited to no common degree of interest, he awaited the arrival of his friend, Morris Clement, who also was to come about the same time to spend a few days in the country.

At six o'clock on a fine summer's evening, the London coach, with four handsome horses, drove up at a brisk pace to the door of the principal inn in the town of ——, when a smart young gentleman, with a cigar in his mouth, stepped off the coach-box, and called for Mr. Duncan, the master of the inn.

"Has no one been here to inquire for me?" asked the youth, in a very authoritative tone.

"Your name, sir, if you please?" inquired the landlord.

"Mr. Clement."

"No, sir."

"Ah!" said the landlady, "I thought I knew his voice. Why, bless me! Master Morris, you're grown so, there's no knowing you."

"Grown? nonsense. Send me a porter immediately, and get me a glass of brandy and water, for I'm choked with dust."

A silent spectator of this scene was Arthur Middleton, who now drew nearer, and, smiling, held out his hand to his friend.

"Ah, my good fellow!" exclaimed Morris, "who should have thought of seeing you here?" when suddenly the cordial expression of his face gave place to one of impatience and anger, as he called again for a porter, and repeated his astonishment that no one had been sent to meet him.

"Can I assist you in any way?" asked Arthur. "I

have nothing to do, and should like a walk across the fields to the farm. I can carry this for you quite well;" and so saying, he stooped to take up a carpet-bag which was lying at their feet.

"If you carry that," said Morris, "I must decline the honor of being your companion. It is really beyond reason that none of the servants should have been sent to meet me. It would serve my mother right to put her to the expense of a postchaise."

"Not on so fine an evening, surely," observed Arthur.

"Fine evening, or not," said Morris, "people ought to be attended to. By the way, have you got sixpence in your pocket? I don't happen to have change, and the coachman won't leave my elbow until I hand out something."

"And the brandy?" asked Arthur, "shall I pay for that?"

"Oh, no! they know me—these people know me," said Morris, with a nod of the head, as he returned the empty glass to the waiter; and then, throwing off the cape which had kept him from the dust, he prepared to walk over the fields to his mother's house.

Arthur Middleton would have found it difficult to say exactly how it was, that his intention of accompanying his friend home had all melted away, during the lapse of the last five minutes. Yet so it was; and after wishing him a good-evening, and a pleasant walk, he turned away in silence to his father's house.

Long before Morris Clement had reached the last field adjoining his paternal home, his sister Ruth had been seated on a stile across the foot-path by which she expected he would come; and no sooner was his figure discoverable in the distance, than she ran forward, unbonneted as she was, nor stopped to gather breath, or strength, until her arms were around her brother's neck. He was at that moment, however, too much engaged with his cigar, for her unceremonious greeting to be altogether welcome, and his

first impulse was to shake from him the sisterly caress, in which Ruth would have been the last person to persist after such a repulse. Indeed, she was too much accustomed to repulsion, for it to awaken angry or revengeful thoughts. What it cost her in the present instance, could only be surmised from the rushing of deep crimson to her usually pale face, and the dropping of her unclasped hands, as if suddenly reminded, that it was her peculiar destiny to have no human stay to hold by in the wide world.

It was not easy to keep up any cheerful conversation after such a meeting, and the brother and sister walked silently together, until Morris, half in play, and half in anger, snatched the comb out of his sister's hair, and threw it on the ground, asking her why she wore such an antediluvian affair as that.

Mrs. Clement received her son at the garden-gate, and his behavior to her was kinder and more respectful than it had been to Ruth; but a cloud was still on his brow, for he had not quite forgiven them for the neglect of not sending a servant to be in waiting for him and his luggage at the inn. In fact, he was now a man of consequence, and he wished it to be felt that he was so; it was therefore no small cause of irritation, that he had to make the fact known himself, and he hoped this would be the last time he should be subjected to the inconvenience of travelling like a schoolboy.

In the old-fashioned parlor at Fearnfield, a table was plentifully spread for such a tea, as those who live in the country, and keep early hours, alone can appreciate; but though this preparation for the most social meal of the day included all that could invite the weary traveller, and remind him of the comfort, the abundance, and the welcome of his home, Morris Clement declared himself incapable of drinking tea at that hour of the day, if at all; and added, that as soon as his mother and sister had finished, he would thank them for a beefsteak and a glass of ale, as he had not yet dined.

Of course everything was done to accommodate the fastidious, but yet most welcome guest; and Ruth and her mother, while their tea was growing cold, busied themselves in making ready, what Morris, when he tasted, declared was never fit to be eaten, except in London. And thus the evening passed over. One thing after another failed to afford the expected satisfaction, and yet no one knew exactly how their pleasure was spoiled, or in what way their hopes were disappointed.

The next morning appeared very difficult for Morris Clement to dispose of, at the farmhouse; so he set off at an early hour, to call on the Middletons. He had occasion, however, to look in at the hotel, to inquire about a small package that was missing; and how it was that he did not reach Mr. Middleton's before the hour of their dinner, we leave to those who loitered about the bar, or read the newspapers in the traveller's room at the Griffin that day.

"Rose Middleton is a beautiful girl," said Morris to his mother and sister, on the following day.

"Is she not beautiful," exclaimed Ruth, "and so light-hearted, it does one good to hear her laugh."

"I should think you might learn to laugh too, if you admire it so much in her," observed Morris.

"I do often laugh," said Ruth with great simplicity, "but I don't suppose it does any one good, or I am sure I would try to laugh more."

"Why, no," said her brother, "I don't think it does; it seems unnatural in you; but when Rose Middleton laughs, it sounds like the very spirit of mirth bursting through all the restraint which that grave Sophy and that moping Arthur would fain impose upon her. Now, the old gentleman is more to my fancy than either of them. He has some life, some comfort in him; and when he has taken his evening glass, he begins to be tolerable company."

Whether Mr. Middleton had been tempted, purely for the sake of his health, and to enable him more effectually to sustain the burden of his pastoral duties,

to take more than one dose through the day, of that medicine which a very worthy physician told him was so excellent; or whether from increasing years, his bodily frame was less able to resist the power of such stimulus; certain it was, that an alteration in his look and manner was very perceptible, after he had partaken of that refreshment, which he conscientiously believed essential to the preservation of his health. So much so, that Rose in her impertinence was apt to say, she would never ask her father for any indulgence until after he had taken his brandy-and-water, for he was then so kind, and so playful, she believed he could deny her nothing.

In fact, the whole family seemed to enjoy the relaxation of mind to which their father then yielded, Mrs. Middleton looking alternately at her husband and her children, to ask if this was not happiness, to have the good man unbending before them, the centre of their circle—smiling around upon them all—the light of their domestic enjoyment, unshadowed by a cloud?

Nor was the pleasure, derived from this relaxation of mind and body, confined to the minister's own family. Neighbors would often step in at the close of the day, knowing that to be the time when the good man was most accessible; and when the social glass was shared with confidential friends, and subjects of private or of public interest were cheerfully discussed, the impression always seemed to be, that the Rev. Joseph Middleton was one of the most edifying of companions, and friendly of men. It had often been thought, by those who conversed with him only in the early part of the day, that he was a little too reserved, a little too severe—but in the evening, when the labors of the day were done, when his children were around him, when the glow of the wholesome medicine which was to procure him sleep for the night and vigor for the day, was beginning to take effect upon his whole frame, then it was that the minister smiled, and listened, and

sympathized in no ordinary degree with the trials and perplexities of his people.

It was on one of these occasions, when his family were gathered around him, and a familiar friend had dropped in, that the countenance of this friend assumed a more than ordinary gravity, as he remarked, in a somewhat vague manner, upon the Widow Clement having her son at home with her at present.

"A fine youth, that," said Mr. Middleton, "a very fine youth. I always thought Morris Clement was a boy of no ordinary parts."

The friend looked doubly grave at the delivery of the first encomium, he shook his head at the second, and heaved a deep sigh at the third.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Middleton, "you think that rare talents are a snare to youth; and for my own part, I should find it difficult to choose for my children, between the power of being more extensively useful, and the danger of being assailed by greater temptation."

As the minister said these words, his eye rested upon the calm pale countenance of his son Arthur. The youth was stooping over a book, with his dark hair falling in deep masses over his cheek and temples, and his high clear forehead gleaming through, like moonlight among clouds. If the heart of the father had doubted before, it did so no longer. The power and the depth of human intellect were there; and what had the low world, with all the array of its vulgar vices, to do with that finely-moulded face, and the mind which beamed forth from every turn and expression of its pure and beautiful features?

"I have been a little afraid," said Mr. Middleton, recurring to the former subject—"I have been a little afraid of a London life for the youth, Morris Clement."

The neighbor gave a very expressive nod, not unaccompanied with that look of pleasure, which some very worthy persons exhibit, on finding their own evil forebodings proved true, and proved before

the sight of men. Indeed, one is sometimes led to question, whether such persons do not in reality experience more satisfaction in a calamitous result of their own foretelling, than sorrow for the calamity itself.

"I always said," exclaimed the neighbor, and he repeated his words, as if what he had said was of unspeakably more importance than what the poor youth had done—"I always said, Mr. Middleton—Mrs. Middleton, I always said, that London would be the ruin of that lad."

"But, surely," said the mother, shrinking at these strange and awful words, "it has not come to that. I, for my part, never saw any harm in Morris Clement."

"Nor I," exclaimed two or three young voices at once.

"Have you ever seen him come out of the bar of the Griffin?" asked the neighbor; and then he finished off his own glass of brandy-and-water, and buttoned his coat, and prepared to go.

The buttoning of the coat, however, was but a faint prelude, for the guest had not yet unburdened his mind, and finding so deep an interest awakened, and his own conversational powers a little stimulated into exercise, he told a sad history, partly true, and partly supposed to be so, of poor Morris Clement having been seen more than once in a state of partial intoxication in the streets of ——.

"I don't believe it!" said Arthur Middleton, starting from his seat, while his eye flashed and his cheek glowed with indignation. "I have seen as much of Morris Clement as most people, and I never saw him otherwise than perfectly sober in my life."

"Nor I," exclaimed Rose again; when suddenly, as if ashamed of having taken part in so serious a matter, she threw her arms around her mother's neck, and hid her blushing face on her shoulder.

"Ah! well, my children," observed Mr. Middle-

ton, sighing deeply, "this is not a time or a place to investigate the matter further. Time, my good friend, will prove or disprove the truth of your forebodings. Let us be thankful that our own families are spared. Let us be thankful that we know how to partake of these blessings of life with moderation. Nay, Mr. Russel," for that was the name of the neighbor, "you will not leave us yet. I have scarcely asked after the health of Mrs. Russel. She is a great sufferer. I have sometimes thought if she could be prevailed upon to try the regimen of my doctor."

"Good-night, sir, good-night," said Mr. Russel again, starting up rather abruptly; and this time he effected his retreat, leaving the family behind to talk over among themselves the subject he had left with them. This was done in all kindness, however, for none of them believed his story; and therefore they soon resumed their accustomed cheerfulness, and gathered around their father in his good-humored state; while Rose pressed upon him her farewell kisses, and each seemed happier than if they had never heard that household peace and personal respectability could be invaded—happier because they looked within and around them, and saw that the light of their own domestic enjoyment was indeed unshadowed by a cloud.

What a cold philosophy, exclaims the world, must that be, which would extinguish such a light, or attempt to prove that it owes its brilliancy to the false fire which is kindled at an unholy shrine! Let us watch the working out of this principle of household comfort and individual benefit; and see what are its consequences upon one of the many thousands of worthy families, who are now making the same experiment.

Mr. Russel was not the only neighbor of the Middletons, who freely offered his remarks upon the conduct of the widow Clement's son; and among the few who pitied, and the many who blamed her,

there were some who felt it their particular duty to speak to the partial mother, and endeavor to open her eyes to his real character.

It needed all the self-possession of Mrs. Clement, and she had a more than ordinary share—it needed all her good principle too, to enable her to bear this communication without betraying the least resentment against those who made it, and to prevent her retorting, as she possibly might have done, in the case of Mr. Russel at least, upon those who neglected their own families, and overlooked the delinquencies there, to go about prying into other people's matters, and exposing the follies of youth. A sudden flash of the eye, and a heightened color of the cheek, were, however, all the outward signs which the countenance of Mrs. Clement exhibited, of the conflict which was going on beneath; and when the first struggle was over, she sat like one schooled to endurance, while fact after fact was related, and while her friends condoled with her upon the trial it must be to have to struggle with the evil tendencies of so unpromising a child.

Mrs. Clement felt, during such visitations from her friends, as if the relief of their absence would set her free from suffering almost too intolerable to be endured; but no sooner were they gone, and the truths they came to tell, left with her, than the growing suspicion that they really were truths, became of itself a source of misery too great to admit of either increase or alleviation.

"I will talk to him myself," said she one day, suddenly starting from her seat; and she called her son into the old parlor, where his infant steps had first been taught to walk. "I will talk to him fully, and freely, before he returns into that great world, to which I have perhaps too rashly trusted him."

Morris came in, with his beautiful hair slightly raised by the exercise he had been taking, from a brow so fair, and clear, and high, that when the fond mother gazed upon it, and caught the fearless glance

of the bright blue eyes beneath, her heart threw off its burden of dark thoughts; and, as if she had deeply wronged him by the very suspicions she had entertained, her look and manner assumed more than their accustomed kindness, as she asked her son to spare her a few moments for conversation on a very serious subject, before he again left home.

"I don't much like your serious subjects," said Morris, "but suppose I must have my parting lecture, and perhaps it would be as well now as at any time."

With these words he sat down, and Mrs. Clement then began a long comment upon the temptations of the world, to which her son listened with strong symptoms of impatience. His countenance and manner, however, underwent considerable change when his mother entered more upon the private history of their family; and especially when she spoke of her husband; for Morris as well as Ruth had recollections of their father, on which they loved to dwell; and in proportion as they delighted in the remembrance of his playful kindness and tenderness toward themselves, they were gratified by hearing everything that was honorable of him from others.

"There is one circumstance in connexion with your father," continued Mrs. Clement, "which I have hitherto kept most scrupulously concealed within my own breast, but which I now think it right you should be acquainted with, in order that you may be more upon your guard against the same temptation. Know, then, that the cause of your father's death was intemperance."

Morris started from his seat. "I thought," said he, "my father's death had been accidental."

"It was so in one sense," replied his mother. "His death was caused by falling from his horse, but the cause of that fall was intoxication."

"Are you sure of that?" asked Morris.

"I am sure," was the reply; and they both sat in silence for some time.

"Was it habitual?" asked Morris again.

"It was," replied his mother, "though there were few persons who knew it to be so; and none but myself were acquainted with the extent to which it had grown upon him. None but myself, in short, knew how he returned home; for I used to send the servants to bed, and often went out to meet him, and assisted, with my own hands, in fastening up his horse, rather than he should be exposed to disgrace before his own people. On that very night—that awful night—I had had strange misgivings about his return home; and as the evening advanced, such nervous apprehensions took possession of me, that I kept your sister and you up later than usual, not daring to be left alone. About the accustomed time, for he was still punctual to the hour of returning, I heard the coming of a horse in the distance. It was a well-known sound, and most welcome to my ear at that moment. I threw open the window. The night was still, and the moon shining clearly. I saw your father turn past the end of the orchard, and ride toward the pond, as he always did before coming into the yard. I saw also that his figure swung to and fro, as if he would lose his balance altogether, and with a sudden impulse I drew back from the window, that I might not see him bending over the water. When I looked again, the horse was without its rider, and plunging, as I though, up the steep side of the pond, as if it had taken fright; for it was a spirited animal, and not fit for such a master. I rushed to the spot, as you may suppose; but what else transpired I never could remember. When the poor body was dragged out of the water, every spark of life was extinguished; for the horse, in attempting to get free, had set its foot upon the temples of your father. and he died—yes, my son, he died, without being able to offer up a single prayer.

"Let us think of these things, Morris—let us lay them to heart for instruction, and awful warning to ourselves; and when you go back into the world, and gay companions would lead you into their dangerous

indulgences, remember your poor father, and refrain, lest you should in time be guilty of his excess."

It was not the remarks, the advice, or even the entreaties of Mrs. Clement which on this occasion had weight with her son. It was the simple and melancholy fact she had told, in connexion with a parent for whose memory he had felt more reverence than any other subject ever had inspired in his mind—it was this fact which made him both sad and serious, as he wandered around the garden and orchard of Fearnfield on the last night before leaving it again for months, or it might be for years.

That heart must be hard indeed, which can at all times steel itself against the recollection of early years, and the associations which cling around all those familiar objects which constituted in childhood the whole of our little world of interest and intelligence. Morris Clement was cheerful, active, bustling, and gay, when mixing in the ways of men; but he was not yet so callous as to forget that he once had a father, and that he had a mother and a sister still. With his own being, these ideas were intimately bound up; and as thought carried him onward from one link of association to another, there were moments even in his existence, when his mind was brought very near to that verge of earthly things, at which the things of eternity must of necessity force themselves into view.

The moonlight night on which Morris paced alone along some of the familiar scenes of his childhood, was one peculiarly adapted to the encouragement of serious and solemn thoughts; and he who would have laughed at his own sentimentality, had a friend surprised him in the act, stood still with folded arms, for a long time gazing up at the moon, and then turning on the other hand to contemplate the old ivy-mantled roof of his paternal home, which looked in the stillness of that summer's night like a perfect picture of comfort and repose.

"And yet I could not live here," said Morris, think

ing aloud. "There must be something wrong either in it or me, that in the very spot where my father spent his life, and where so many a poor fellow would be happy to find his home, I could not exist. Perhaps there *is* something wrong," said he again, after walking on a few paces—"perhaps there is something wrong in the life I am leading. And yet my father, even in this quiet spot, was no better than his son. It is not then the place we live in, which makes the difference, but the habits we adopt. Suppose now I were to lay down some strict rule for myself. I wonder whether I could abide by it. I have a great mind to try; or at least to master myself in one thing. I had not an idea, and if any one else had told me, I would not have believed, that such had been my father's death. It is too horrible to think of. If now I were to bring myself to make a great determination."

Morris clasped his hands together, and looked up to the clear sky. Had but the simplest prayer which ever passed forth from a sincere and trusting heart at that moment stirred his lips—had it even existed as a thought, it is possible it might have fixed his determination, and decided him for life; but no such holy impulse quickened the rising effort of his soul, and it sunk again to take into its low and grovelling calculations the ways and thoughts of the companions to whose society he was about to return.

Through the whole of the next day, while preparations for his departure were going on, Morris Clement was serious, if not sad; and his mother was well-pleased to observe the impression she believed to have been made upon her son by the conversation of the previous afternoon. That evening and night were to be spent at Mr. Middleton's, in order to enable him to take the earliest conveyance in the morning for town. It was congenial to his graver feelings, too, to enjoy this reunion with a family whom he could not but respect, immediately before his separation from them for so long a time;

and he therefore took his seat among the Middletons with an air of cordiality, which made their kind hearts warm toward him in an instant, as if there had been no estrangement on his part, or cause for unfavorable suspicion on theirs. Rose was, as usual, the chief object of attraction to him, as she flitted about the room with her light step, and playful laugh; while her good-humored raillery, softened down by the maternal tenderness of her mother, tended to make him feel as if admitted on an equal footing to the kindred fellowship of their fireside circle.

"If this be religion," said Morris to himself, as he looked from one to another during the course of the evening, "I should scarcely mind being religious myself; for surely these people must be happy."

As these thoughts crossed his mind, the bell of Mr. Middleton's study sounded; and a servant came to say that her master would like to speak with Mr. Clement.

"So the bitters have to come yet," thought he, after all these sweets. "I might have been sure it would be so."

Mr. Middleton was seated in a large chair, with the Bible open before him, and with the air of the minister and the pastor—the instructer and the comforter—the friend and the father, equally blended in his look and manner. He smiled with great benevolence as the young man entered; and instead of beginning with a stern voice to remonstrate with him for certain well-known flaws in his moral conduct, he evinced by his questions, delicately put, so deep an interest in his worldly affairs and personal circumstances, that Morris was soon drawn out into a freedom of communication, which a few days ago he would have thought the last thing likely to result from a private interview with the minister in his study.

Mr. Middleton, beside many other advantages of

person and manner, possessed a voice which at once seemed to find its way to the heart; and though Morris Clement was not peculiarly gifted with those qualities which may be said especially to belong to that portion of human nature, there were kind tones and cordial expressions, which even he, in his better moments, was unable to resist. Mr. Middleton, too, spoke of his father, and Morris ventured to ask him if he knew him well.

"I did," replied the minister. "Has your mother told you anything particular connected with his death?"

"She has," replied the young man, in a broken voice; for he felt the shame as well as the grief of the story.

"I believe," said Mr. Middleton, "there are habits of body to which indulgence of this kind is more congenial than it is to others; and for persons of such natural constitution, it becomes peculiarly important that they should be always on their guard against excess."

"The difficulty," interrupted Morris, "is to know exactly where excess begins. I have been thinking this very day, that I would master myself in this one point, by leaving off everything of the kind, now and for ever."

"The mere enthusiasm of youth," observed Mr. Middleton—"youth that always must be rushing into extremes. Take, my dear boy, a more temperate course, and you will be likely to be more sure. Besides, these good things of life were given us for our use, not for our abuse; and by refraining in time, we show a better sense of duty, and, in reality, set a better example to others, than by rejecting them altogether."

"But I want to know which is the right time," said Morris, rather impatiently. "I want a rule—a test that will serve me on all occasions. Can you give me that?"

"Your own good sense; your—"

"Nay, that will never do; for my good sense begins to leave me before I am half comfortable; and I feel it, like the courage of Acres, 'oozing out, as it were, at the ends of my fingers,' at the very time when I want it most."

"Speak seriously, my dear boy; speak more seriously, or I can not go along with you. It is a subject which does not admit of jesting; for has it not been the cause of more ruin and more wretchedness than almost any other?"

"That is the very reason why I wish to treat it seriously—why I wish to hold no parley with an enemy who has either slain by force, or subdued by stratagem, so many more valiant men than myself, but to quit the field in which he spreads his snares for ever."

"I tell you again, it is the rashness and impetuosity of youth which prompt you to this extravagance."

"Nay, my good sir, you must not call it extravagance; for I have been reckoning up how much it would save my poor mother; and even that view of the subject makes it almost worth my while; for she knows, and I know, too, that I have cost her enough already. I am not, however, particularly wedded to the system of abstinence; and since you do not approve of it, I have no objection to give you my promise that I won't adopt it yet."

With these words the theme was changed, for it was not a favorite one with Mr. Middleton; and he had, in his office of pastor, as in that of friend to a fatherless youth about to commit himself to the world, many subjects which he regarded as of deeper import, to urge upon him.

Their conversation was long, and it appeared to have been satisfactory to both; for when they joined the family at their evening devotions, it was with a cheerfulness of look, and cordiality of manner, which encouraged every one to hope that the young

man had been made better, as well as wiser, by the ordeal through which he had passed.

After a solemn prayer, which earnestly commended the young man to that care which can alone preserve from every temptation, the family sat down to their evening meal—the plentiful supper-table of the olden time. Mr. Middleton had, as usual, his biscuit, and that potent medicine, without which he believed the functions of his body could not be kept in healthy exercise.

"Look here," said he, lifting up the glass which his daughter Sophia had supplied; "this is my measure, and when I exceed this, I know that I do wrong."

"Ah! sir," exclaimed Morris, "you have your faithful Hebe to supply you with just that portion, and no more. But suppose you had two or three wild fellows, such as I associate with, always at your elbow, you would not find it quite so easy to keep to your mark."

"But I take it only once a day; and here, again, is my security—I take it only once a day, except when the state of my digestive powers requires it."

"And suppose your digestive powers grew worse, and required it oftener and oftener?"

"I should think it was doing me harm, instead of good."

"Suppose, then, your doctor still recommended it?"

"I should still take it, thinking he understood the case better than I did."

"What! to any excess?"

"No, certainly; I should stop at the limits of sobriety."

"And how would you find power to stop, provided there was in your nature a sort of constitutional craving for such things; a disposition to drown your cares, and sooth your sensibilities, and lull your pains to rest? Oh! sir, you do not understand the case at all. But, as I said before, I am not come

over to the starvation system yet; so I will help myself, if you please, to a little of your excellent brandy, for I have been far from well all the day, and I don't like this journey at five in the morning."

The expression of Mr. Middleton's countenance when this appeal was made to him, and for some moments afterward, might have puzzled the ablest physiognomists. He could not, for reasons of his own showing, refuse the request, if such it might be called; and while the young man, with the most perfect coolness, helped himself as he had proposed, an awkward silence stole over the whole company, which Morris was the first to break, by declaring that he had never tasted better brandy in his life.

"An excellent stomachic, I have no doubt, sir," he exclaimed; "and I am sure you have my best wishes in the use of it."

There are few things more uncomfortable than to be convicted of inconsistency; and Mr. Middleton felt this deeply—so deeply, that he was quite unable to enjoy his cordial draught that night. And when Rose took her farewell kiss, after being told more than once it was past her hour for retiring, she saw that twice the usual quantity remained in her father's glass, though he did not on this occasion lift it to her lips, and she would have been put to deep shame if he had.

Altogether, that evening, which had begun so pleasantly, became most unsatisfactory before its close; for in proportion as the guest grew bold and talkative, every one else grew more grave and silent, until at last he was recommended to take the advantage of early rest, in consideration of the next day's journey. Altogether, that evening was most unsatisfactory; because, where there exists a conviction of having sanctioned evil in others, it is in reality as painful as that of having done evil ourselves. The minister's family had received their young friend among them with more of pity than of blame, and they had treated him with their ha-

bitual kindness, in the hope that the earnest admonitions which they knew would be mingled with the minister's parting charge, would be of lasting benefit to the traveller in his future course. The idea of sin had never, for a single moment, either in the minds of the young or the old, attached itself to Mr. Middleton's familiar habits. But when the widow's son—the untried—the suspected one—did the very same act, even under the same plea, they seemed unanimously to experience a sort of involuntary shrinking, as if the act itself was wrong; though it would have been extremely difficult to say in what point it differed so materially from that of the good minister himself. All felt this, and therefore every voice was silent; for how was it possible to reprove in one case, without implying censure in the other?

"It may be his last visit," said Arthur Middleton, when he retired to his own room that night. "It may be the last opportunity we shall ever have of encouraging him in what is good, or checking him in what is evil. *We* knew his temptation, *we* were warned of his weakness—what have *we* done to counteract the influence of habits already formed, to strengthen him for his future course, or to preserve him from the dangers he has yet to meet?—*we*, who set up so high a standard for ourselves—*we*, who preach to others—what have we done for him?"

Arthur Middleton fell into a deep revery after he had uttered these words, and strange thoughts presented themselves, for the first time, to his mind, that, perhaps, there was required of the ministers of religion a degree of self-denial, and personal discipline, for the sake of others, which their own spiritual safety might not seem to require. But the thought was transient; "for how," he asked himself, "could any man be more useful, or more exemplary in that office than his father? or who could set a better example to others, by using the good things of this life with more gratitude and moderation?"

CHAPTER II.

More than a year had elapsed from the time already described, when Arthur Middleton, having engagements which detained him some days in London, called at the office of Messrs. Bakewell & Co. to inquire for Mr. Clement. A handsome youth of about eighteen came forward to answer his inquiry, stating that Mr. Clement was just then absent; but if the stranger would leave his address, he had the pleasure of being intimately acquainted with Mr. Clement, and would not fail to deliver any message that might be left for him.

There was a clear fresh look about the youth, and a frank expression in his countenance, which could not fail to attract the regard, and win the confidence, of one so unpractised in the world as Arthur; and the two strangers appeared mutually reluctant to conclude the interchange of mere common-place, which occupied them in their first and necessarily short interview.

London is so full of anxious, tired-looking faces—of eyes that seem as if they saw not—of brows that evidently ache—of cheeks over which the fresh wind never blows—and of lips grown strange to the language of the heart; that to meet with genuine unsophisticated nature in its close and crowded haunts, is a real refreshment to the soul. Arthur Middleton was peculiarly calculated to understand and appreciate the character of his new acquaintance, Henry Clifton; for though absent, and often dull, in what is called society, there were chords of sympathy in his nature, which, when touched, were capable of producing the

most lively and intense enjoyment. Thus, though habitually reserved, there were moments when his inmost heart was laid bare before the friends he trusted, while all the secret treasures of his deep thoughts, and hidden feelings, derived additional value from the fact of their being so rarely displayed.

"You are a very odd kind of person," said Morris Clement to Arthur Middleton, the next day, when he called upon him; "the oddest person I ever saw in my life, not to want to go to the opera, or the theatre, or any place worth seeing; but you will think again, perhaps, and I shall be always at your service. In the mean time, I dine with the Cliftons to-day; and here, I take it, is an invitation for you;" so saying, he handed over a note from young Clifton, inviting him, in the most frank and cordial manner, to join their mutual friend in spending the remainder of that day at his father's cottage, a few miles out of London.

"You must tell me," said Arthur, "what kind of people they are, and of whom their family consists, before I can possibly decide; for as I have but little time to spare, I should not like to be drawn in for a whole day of worse than weariness."

"Is it not enough," said Morris, laughing, "that they are my friends? and to have found real friends in this great city, is no trifling matter. But if you wish for a more particular description, you shall have it; for in some respects they are as odd as yourself."

"In what way? in having no taste for public amusements?"

"No, not exactly that; for they have taste enough for everything but wine."

"But wine? What can you mean?"

"I mean that if you dine with them, you must not expect to see wine upon the table."

"I understand you. They are mean, stingy, or whatever else you please to call it."

"By no means, I never knew a more liberal family

in my life; and yet they neither drink wine themselves, nor offer it to their guests."

"I suppose, then, they keep to the national habits of merry Old England in her ale-drinking days, and give you the best table-beer?"

"I wish they did; but the worst of it is, one must be content with pure water, or not sit down at their table."

"Their circumstances, then, have been unpropitious."

"Nothing of the kind; Mr. Clifton spent his youth in India, and I believe brought home with him a large fortune, which he appears both to enjoy himself, and to be willing to share with others."

"You excite my curiosity more and more."

"And I will raise it still higher, by telling you the chief secret of my intimacy with them. Alice Clifton, the oldest daughter, is the finest girl in England; and if I mistake not, she is not insensible to the attentions of your humble servant, and hers. You will meet me, then, at four, as Clifton has appointed, and we will go out together.

"I will," said Arthur in a sort of musing dream, into which he had suddenly fallen. And instead of hastening to a distant part of the city on business of considerable importance, he found himself, after the expiration of an hour, exactly in the same place, and the same position, in which his friend had left him. That friend in his own person afforded no very pleasing subject of reflection to one who was accustomed to look beyond the surface of things, and who saw in every human being either what was, or what might have been, a gradual preparation for another and a more glorious state of existence. With these views the heart of the young enthusiast was chilled whenever he contemplated the countenance of Morris Clement. His appearance, manners, and address, were unexceptionable. Arthur often wished his own were as good; but when he talked with him on subjects of deep interest, especially on those in

which feeling constituted a prominent part, there was a cold glassy look in the eye of Morris Clement, which showed but too plainly how little he understood the companion with whom he conversed.

Arthur had often felt this instinctive repulsion when in the company of Morris; but never so forcibly as on his present visit to London. Indeed, so different were their objects of pursuit, and the subjects of interest which occupied their minds, that, although born within a mile of each other, of nearly the same age, and having shared their childhood together, there were few topics on which they could converse except in the most superficial manner. Nor had time, which reconciles so many differences, and, when it passes in the society of towns, wears down the peculiarities of natural character to a certain degree of uniformity and sameness of aspect, done anything toward bringing the two young men to a nearer acquaintance with each other. Each, in fact, had advanced further on his own distinct and separate course, and the distance between them was daily and hourly increasing.

They would have felt this more, had they attempted such a thing as a stroll together over the pleasant pastures, and through the woods of Fearnfield: but the hurry and whirl of the streets of London left them little opportunity for making observations upon character and feeling. To Arthur this state of incapacity for reflection was peculiarly distressing; and he more than once excited the laughter of his companion, by asking how it was possible to *think* in London?

"We do not think," said Morris; "we act. Man is a ruminating animal in the country. He goes there to meditate, and to feel, and to take note of his own sensations. He comes into the busy world to execute his own schemes, to act out great principles, and to fight in that glorious field, where the meed of honor is awarded to the mastery of mind."

"The crowds we meet," observed Arthur, "look

like anything but men aspiring to glory of any kind, or even capable of understanding what great principles are. I should rather say they were so many machines set in motion by others, and performing their regular routine of daily labor, without calculation, thought, or feeling."

"To a certain extent, you are right," replied Morris. "The greater proportion of these men are machines, by which the others work. And it is this which chiefly constitutes the glory of which I speak, that where multitudes congregate together, masses of common mind, if I may use the expression, can be brought into subjection by mental power of a superior grade, and having been put in order, can be kept in operation by the principle of self-interest, extending through different channels."

"I like not this moral slavery," said Arthur; "this degradation of the many to exalt the few. Give me a state of existence in which each man, however humble his outward circumstances, feels and acknowledges within himself those emotions, faculties, and powers, which are capable of being exercised through all eternity for his own happiness, and for the glory of his Maker. This is what I call greatness. The meanest peasant may feel it as he labors in the field; and the greater will that nation be, the more the number of minds within it which pant with this noble, this heavenward aspiration to rise above the common wants of daily life, and to think, and feel, and act, in reference to the life to come."

"You are a dreamer yet!" exclaimed Morris. "I should like to subject you to a regular training for what I call life; we should soon cure you of these fancies here. But here we are, at Clifton Villa, as I choose to call it; and, happily for us, all in good time for the old gentleman's dinner."

The residence of Mr. Clifton was so completely hid from the public road, that Arthur had no idea what kind of place he was about to see; and the

stiff or stately aspect of the buildings and premises around, were but little in unison with his notions either of beauty or enjoyment. On first entering the grounds, however, a scene burst upon his view which seemed more like enchantment than reality, from the contrast it presented to the dull streets and dusty lanes through which they had passed: and Arthur, whose imagination was but too apt at poetical association, began almost to question whether the gardens of Armida were not thrown open before him.

"You must have an enchantress here," said he, "or the scene would not be complete."

"Wait a few moments," said Morris, "and my enchantress will appear."

At the door of the cottage, if such it might be called, and beneath a shade of trellis-work interwoven with roses and jasmin, stood Henry Clifton, waiting to receive his guests. And now he appeared to be in his native element; far more so than while standing among rolls of plans and parchment in the office of Bakewell & Co.

"Would you like to take one turn round the garden before dinner?" said he; "I was just going to bring in my sister Alice, and we can all go together if you please."

The grounds and the scenery around the residence of the Cliftons, were just those in which our English homes are peculiarly rich, and which are never seen in greater perfection than in the neighborhood of London, particularly in the early part of the summer. It consisted of green hills, deep woods, and spreading trees, with the light and graceful varieties of flowering shrubs, and drooping willows; and here and there a velvet lawn, and a smooth walk winding around beds of roses, and then losing itself in some narrow dell, where the shade was deeper, and the pathway less frequented. The greatest charm of such scenery may best be described as its attractiveness—its tendency to lead you on in a state

of constant expectation; for, after all, you seldom find anything so really beautiful as the distance seems to promise; and when emerging from the closeness and turmoil of London, it is a real luxury to trace out these winding paths, to feel the green-sward beneath the weary foot, and to listen to the song of birds where they are safe from the fowler's snare.

There had never been a finer day throughout the spring, or the summer which had but recently commenced, than that on which Arthur Middleton looked around him for the first time, upon the scene already described; and, lost in a sort of dream, perhaps too happy to be very talkative, he walked along with his friends to an alcove in the garden, where the sound of children's voices—so softly sweet, and musically gay, that they might almost have been mistaken for happy birds—attracted their attention.

Henry Clifton was the only one who ventured uninvited to enter this sylvan retreat; but he soon returned to usher in his friends, by introducing them to his sister, a young lady about two years older than himself, whose occupation had evidently been that of teaching her younger sisters. All books, and all symptoms of scholastic discipline, were, however, soon dismissed; and the three little rosy girls who had so lately been at work, threw back their dark flowing hair, and scampered along the walks in happy rivalry, each hoping to be first to spring upon the step at the door, where their father was already waiting to receive them.

"Alice," said her brother, making way for Arthur to advance, "Mr. Clement has done us the favor to bring with him to-day the gentleman of whom I spoke. He is fresh from the country; you will have more hope of him for that."

Alice held out her hand; for she was motherless, and she felt that as the mistress of her father's house, the duties of hospitality devolved upon her in an especial manner; yet this act, so cordial in itself,

was performed in such a manner, that none could have presumed upon it, or have ventured, in consequence, so much as one step further toward an intimacy with Miss Clifton. Still, she was neither distant nor cold. Morris Clement thought her delightfully free. The fact was perhaps not the most flattering to his self-love, for it was no other than this—that Alice Clifton, unlike many young ladies who simper and blush when a gentleman speaks to them, never for an instant took into her calculations that any man she had yet seen could become her lover; and consequently she conversed with men, whether young or old, precisely on the same terms on which she would have conversed with her grandmother.

To Morris Clement Alice Clifton had evidently something to say, and, therefore, she lingered a little way behind the rest, questioning him very earnestly, and looking intently into his face while he answered her.

"It is all about a poor old man," said her brother to Arthur, as they turned round to wait for them. "My sister goes out so little herself, she is obliged to employ us as her agents: and the worst of it is, she will not be convinced when we tell her, that her charities have been misapplied. She always maintains, and I don't know but there is some truth in it, that it is better to be deceived ten times over, than once to act upon an unjust suspicion to the injury of an innocent being.

"Are those your sister's sentiments?" asked Arthur.

"Yes," replied her brother, "and she acts upon them."

"Heaven will reward her," said Arthur, "but this world will not."

As Arthur said these words, he ventured to look at Alice Clifton again. She had not struck him at first as particularly beautiful, and even now, when her heightened color died away, which it did in a moment, a casual observer would not have singled

her out as in any way distinguished for personal charms; but the instant that a smile lighted up her countenance, more especially when engaged in earnest conversation, she might have formed a model for the painter or the sculptor, had the beauty of expression been that which he wished to portray. She was so simple too in her dress, her manners, and her general appearance, that no grace was borrowed from adventitious circumstances. Every charm she possessed had the advantage of being perfectly natural, and the additional advantage of developing some tone of feeling, or quality of mind, peculiar to herself. Mr. Clifton had spent the early part of his life in India, and in that glowing clime his tastes had all been formed. He was, therefore, fond of seeing his daughter's complexion set off by the rich colors of the East. Thus, on the present occasion, though dressed in simple white, she wore a scarf of gorgeous die across her shoulders, which harmonized well with her bright flowing hair, and brighter eyes, and blushes that went and came with almost every changing thought.

Born in a colder climate, Alice Clifton could scarcely have looked or moved, or even felt as she did. But the skies of India had scorched her cheek in childhood, and though when unexcited she was more than usually pale, a warm fresh current from her heart rushed instantaneously to her face, the moment any feeling was awakened at its source.

"Father," said Alice, reverently looking up to the noble yet somewhat enfeebled figure which stood beneath the trellis-work at the door, "have you been introduced to this gentleman from the country?"

"No," said Mr. Clifton, smiling, and holding out his hand to Arthur, "how should I, when you take care to keep all the gentlemen to yourself? I am glad to see you all, however: walk in, gentlemen, if you please. Dinner, I believe, is announced, and you know we old men from India are not the most remarkable for patience."

It was, indeed, not difficult to perceive from the lines and the movements of Mr. Clifton's face, that silent endurance was not his forte, though there were expressions there of kindness and benevolence which far surpassed every other. With many traces of manly beauty, he still retained a noble carriage and dignified demeanor, though the slow wasting of disease was but too evident in his deep eye, and hollow cheek, in his sallow-parched complexion, and in the feverish look of his thin, and sometimes burning hand. With all these symptoms of bodily disorder, it was scarcely likely that the mind of Mr. Clifton should have remained unharmed, and here was the constant trial against which his daughter had to struggle—an irritability which destroyed his own peace, but which, at the same time, was so frankly confessed, and often so generously atoned for, that Alice almost loved her father better than if he had not had a fault to forgive.

The table of Mr. Clifton was spread with great plenty, and with an equal degree of elegance and order. Many of the luxuries of the season were there, but still there was no wine, and the family themselves were so accustomed to this omission, that they seldom made any apology for not supplying their guests in the usual manner. It so happened, however, on the present occasion, that Mr. Clifton did recollect some apology might be due to a perfect stranger, and, therefore, he addressed himself to Arthur, by observing that he looked ill—"almost as ill," he added, "as if he had lived ten years in India."

"I fear, my good sir," he continued, "you have been studying too hard. Remember the mind can no more bear to be overworked than the body, and it is much the most valuable of the two. You see," he added, "I have no wine upon my table; it is not the rule of my house to take it; but if you are under medical care, and your doctor prescribes it for

your health, do not scruple to say so, and my servants will bring it."

Arthur frankly disclaimed all medical restriction; he even declared he was not ill; but confessed that he often took wine, and believed it impossible for him to go through much fatigue without it.

"Have you ever made the trial?" asked Mr. Clifton.

"No, certainly not;" replied Arthur.

"Then you are not qualified to form an opinion as regards your own case. My doctors, for instance, one and all, have told me that I was killing myself by the mode of life I was pursuing. I have asked them whether old gentlemen from India, who drink wine, do not die; and, though I feel it is but by a frail tenure that I hold, on this side the grave, I have made the experiment often enough to know that my present abstinence is the best medicine for me."

"And yet you appear far from well," observed Arthur.

"I am," resumed Mr. Clifton, "and you must not mistake me so far as to suppose, that I speak as if any mode of living, even the most strict, would repair a shattered constitution like mine. Besides which, we know it is appointed unto all men to die, and that the diseases which lead to the grave are almost as certain as death itself. I merely assert, that having made the experiment fairly, and repeated it often, I am convinced, in my own case, that I am better without any stimulus of the kind already alluded to, that I am not only in a condition, humanly speaking, to live longer, but, what is of more consequence, I am more the master of myself, and more capable of rational enjoyment. I know not whether it is to be attributed to the climate of India, to the many ailments which still hang about me, or to the natural infirmity of an ill-governed mind, but my constitutional, and almost continual temptation, is to the sin of impatience and ill-humor. I know it, I feel it, and my poor Alice feels it too; yet with constant

care as regards my diet, and total abstinence from wine, and everything of that kind, I find myself cooler and quieter, and better able to bear the little provocations which perpetually assail a temperament like mine. Besides which, there are the poor people around me. Have you ever thought of these things, my young friend ?"

"Never," replied Arthur, "as you appear to be thinking of them, though none can feel more than I do the repulsive nature of intemperance."

"And did it never occur to you," asked Mr. Clifton, "that instead of being repelled and driven away by the intemperate, we ought to be attracted by them, we ought to endeavor to seek and to save them ?"

"I know we ought," replied Arthur, "if that were possible ; but how can we reach, by any argument, a man whose mind is not his own, whose reason is gone, and whose soul lies prostrate in darkness ?"

"Ah ! there is the root of the matter," exclaimed Mr. Clifton. "That is exactly the argument I should use myself in support of my own system. How, indeed, are we to reach by advice or entreaty, the man whose reason has been voluntarily extinguished? There is no way left for us, for if conviction could reach him, it would be through the medium of his own sufferings. And it does reach him sometimes—a living, deep conviction of the awfulness of his situation ; and yet he wants the moral power to escape from his mortal enemy. What we want then is a plan, and a union in our plan, for putting the intemperate at least in a condition to read his Bible and to pray. Having done this, we can only commend him to higher and more efficient help than ours. It is not our fault if he goes no further."

At this point, the conversation suddenly took a different turn ; but Arthur pondered these words in his mind, as he was wont to do any moral truth which he believed to bear upon the well-being of society, and the advancement of man in the scale of immo-

tal beings. They made a deep impression, but there is often a long state of experience between impression and conviction; and, sometimes, a stage still longer between that and a willingness to act upon conviction. Altogether, the day spent at Mr. Clifton's was a grave and rather a sad one to him, for he felt more than ever in his life, his natural timidity, contrasted with the easy flow of animal spirits which Morris Clement exhibited; and while he shrunk back into his own secret store of brooding thoughts, he saw his friend, and Henry Clifton, and Alice, conversing with the greatest freedom and animation, on subjects which had never appeared to him as worthy of a single thought.

At length the hour approached for the two guests to take their leave; and though Arthur felt, that had he himself been different, the home of the Cliftons might have been like an earthly paradise to him, he was not sorry to relieve them, as he supposed, from the burden of his society.

A few days after this, though engagements pressed upon Arthur Middleton, he consented to dine with Morris Clement, provided it might be at an early hour, and on condition that he should make his escape directly after dinner, as he had to travel some miles out of town, to attend a public meeting that evening. It was an ill-chosen visit to make at such a time, and Arthur found his thoughts more than usually diverted from the channel into which he wished them to flow, for the subject of conversation chosen by his friend, was the progress he believed himself to be making in the affections of Alice Clifton.

"You observed, of course," he said, "the pleasant terms on which we met?"

"I did," replied Arthur, very gravely.

"Now I will freely confess to you," continued Morris, "that it is not the personal charms of Miss Clifton alone which constitute her attraction. It is of the utmost importance to me to make what is called a good match, and the old father—"

"Stop, stop!" exclaimed Arthur, rising suddenly, "I will not hear you. Alice Clifton was never meant to be the subject of calculations such as these."

Morris looked in amazement at his friend; and when Arthur had descended, as he called it, from his theatricals, and had resumed his seat, he went on:—

"What on earth is the matter with you, my good fellow?" said he; "I mean the girl no harm.. Her feelings are evidently interested, and I consult her choice as well as my own."

"Are you sure of that?"

"I have circumstantial evidence in my favor; and if not, what is that to you?"

"Nothing to me, certainly," said Arthur; "nothing in the world." But though he strongly disclaimed all personal interest in the matter, and most sincerely believed he had none, his spirits sunk in a manner he was unable to account for, while his countenance betrayed an extreme of depression, upon which his friend rallied him without much delicacy.

Piqued and annoyed beyond expression, Arthur had one resource of which he availed himself—a resource which has been the refuge of thousands under a temporary irritation. He drank more wine that day than usual, and thought it gave him nerve, and freedom, and power, both to endure and to act. When he rose from the dinner-table, he was therefore a greater man in his own opinion than when he sat down to it; and instead of feeling appalled at the prospect which awaited him in the duties of the evening, he was all excitement, ambition, and hope. Multitudes of ideas, and quickly-shifting images, flitted before his mental vision, as he pursued his rapid course to the place of appointment. He seemed to have more to say than could by any possibility be uttered in one night; and had he then been asked to describe what were his peculiar notions of human

greatness, he might with truth have answered, it consisted in feeling as he felt at that moment.

When Arthur Middleton stood upon the platform that night before a silent and crowded audience, his cheek was pale, but his eye was wild and fiery; while the rapidity of his movements indicated all the vivid sensations of a mind as sensitive as it was ardent. The cause he had been engaged to advocate was one of the noblest which could occupy the thoughts, or excite the energies, of a benevolent and deep-feeling mind, and the sympathies of the people went along with him, as he traced out its bearings upon the temporal and eternal interests of mankind. An older speaker had already been listened to, while he delivered a long statement of mere facts, and the minds of all were thus prepared for the burst of eloquence which followed.

But who are those upon whom the eye of the young orator has fallen for a moment, just in the short interval he has allowed himself for gathering up his strength to begin afresh? One glance was sufficient. There is a stimulant deeper, and more powerful than all others. The eyes of Alice Clifton were upon him, and she was looking as if her inmost soul was stirred by sympathy with his.

The subject in fact was one in which the Cliftons took the liveliest interest. The cause was one which had engaged the father's most earnest attention, and to promote which he had bestowed largely from his ample means. He was therefore very properly given place to, on all such occasions, as a leading and influential man; and though no public speaker himself, he generally held a prominent situation among those who sustained the more arduous duties of such meetings. Had Arthur Middleton been in a more observant humor that evening, he would have seen and recognised Mr. Clifton among the gentlemen seated on the platform. But it was enough for him, now that Alice was before him; and if the rapt attention of the many, and the admiration of the few

were fixed upon the speaker before he made this discovery, their subsequent astonishment was not to be expressed but by such a burst of thrilling acclamation when he resumed his seat, as made the lights appear to dance, and the building to shake, before his dazzled and bewildered sight.

Alice Clifton had looked upon the orator when he first stood up with the most perfect ignorance of ever having seen him before. She knew his name was Middleton, and that he was reported to be a very popular young man; hut it never once entered into her mind to identify him with the dull, spiritless-looking person who had dined at her father's table a few days before. All at once, however, the idea flashed upon her. She snatched the paper from her brother's hand, on which were the names of the speakers, and looking up again, exclaimed aloud, "It is the very same! It is the Mr. Middleton who dined with us the other day."

"And so it is," exclaimed her brother, almost equally astonished. "Why did not Clement tell us who, and what he was?"

"Most probably he did not know himself," said Alice rather contemptuously. "How should he understand such a character?"

At this very moment Morris Clement appeared, for he had been invited to join the Cliftons on this occasion; and though by no means one that was congenial to his taste, he knew too well the habits and sentiments of the family, not to endeavor in some measure to adapt, or rather to appear to adapt, his own to theirs.

Morris knew perfectly well, too, that his friend was engaged to speak at this meeting; but it was a fact which in no way interested him, as he considered all Arthur's gifts, propensities, and occupations, as equally beneath the regard of a man of the world; and from all he had ever observed of his capabilities, he augured little from their public display. What then was his astonishment to find the attention of the

Cliftons so riveted, that they scarcely perceived his presence; while the general stillness of the meeting evinced that an impression of no common nature was fixing the minds of the many congregated there. Morris, as might have been expected, endeavored to attract the ear of Alice by a few playful whispers, but in vain. She could neither see nor hear any one but the eloquent being before her, whose very looks, from the animation of a deep-feeling soul, now glowed into the most radiant beauty, such as she could not but feel grieved and astonished that she had not observed before.

As usual on such occasions, the meeting was no sooner over, than a party of friends, consisting of those who were considered the most able supporters of the cause, repaired to the house of an opulent and influential gentleman residing in the place. With his family the Cliftons were on intimate terms; and as their residence was too distant for them to return that night, their whole party had been pressed to accept the hospitality of their friends.

Morris Clement, though feeling a little out of his place, was included in the number; and he gladly placed himself by the side of Alice Clifton at the plentiful board around which the company were seated, not for refreshment only, but for the purpose of entering more fully and more freely into facts connected with the subject of the previous meeting. Arthur Middleton, of course, was seated at the upper end of the table; for he was now a distinguished guest; and his opinion was appealed to, as to that of an experienced and deep-thinking man. With him, however, the energy of the moment was gone. The excitement under which he had spoken, had been more than nature of herself could have supplied; and the consequent depression was in the same proportion.

"How dreadfully ill he looks?" said Alice, with an expression of the deepest concern. And while Arthur sunk back in his chair, and drew his hand across his

forehead, raising up from his pale brow the tresses of raven hair which shadowed it like a cloud, she asked her brother "who at that moment would believe him to be the same being he had appeared but a few moments before?"

"There is a secret in the change," said Morris, "which the eloquence of some of our ablest statesmen might explain."

"What do you mean?" asked Alice.

"I mean," resumed Morris, "that some of our finest orators never spoke so well as when they had taken their wine freely."

Alice Clifton colored deeply, and her eye flashed upon the speaker, as she asked again, if he meant to insinuate that Mr. Middleton had taken too much wine.

"Not *too much*," certainly, was the laughing reply. "It can not have been too much, when it has produced such an effect."

"Take care what you say," said Alice. "Be sure that you speak the truth, and nothing but the truth."

"Have I not the best chance to know what is truth in this case? Arthur Middleton dined with with me, and he left my table only one hour before he stood upon that platform, whence the potent thunder of his eloquence seems to be still rolling."

"And he came to the meeting intoxicated?"

"Oh, no, I do not say that;—excited—stimulated—anything you please short of that. But I will not insist upon the past. You shall judge for yourself. Watch him now, and see if he does not trim his lamp again at the same source, and shine as brightly as ever."

Alice looked toward the end of the table at which Arthur was seated. At that very moment his glass was filled by the kind hand of their hospitable host; and Morris took good care that her attention should be directed the same way whenever it was replenished.

Arthur Middleton meanwhile knew what was expected of him. He knew that his duties were but

half completed when the public meeting closed; and gladly as he would have sunk into obscurity, and hid his head in the meanest apartment of that spacious mansion, he knew that he must make an effort to rouse himself with fresh energy to redoubled exertion, or that the interest already excited would die away with the transient emotions his eloquence had awakened.

The effort was consequently made, and not without effect. He soon became the only speaker. Men, older and wiser than himself, listened in silent astonishment; and the evening closed with this conviction on the minds of all—that so good a cause, with such an advocate, could never fail.

The public meeting, at which Arthur Middleton had produced so great a sensation, was the first of a series. Others were held in the neighborhood, and his strength was severely taxed to support them all. On the next occasion which called him to this duty, the Cliftons were again present. Again Alice and her brother were seated in front of the platform, and Arthur felt his cheek glow as he looked down, and saw that they were there. When he stood up to speak, however, there was no glance of recognition from Alice. So far from it, she never raised her eyes during the whole time he addressed the meeting; but, stooping rather lower than was necessary, she appeared wholly occupied in examining and arranging some papers which she held in her hand.

"I will compel her to listen to me," said Arthur to himself; and he uttered that night one of his most powerful appeals to the heart, and the feelings of woman; and many a raised handkerchief gave evidence that his appeal was not in vain, at least so far as tears bore witness to the force of nature, and of truth. Alice had wept among the rest; and although those beautiful eyes, whose familiar expression he had already learned by heart, were still bent down, the young orator was more than satisfied with the effect he had produced: he knew not that pity

for himself was mingling with the emotions he felt so proud to have awakened. That evening they met again. It so happened they were seated together at table, for Miss Clifton was generally a distinguished guest, and those who were acquainted with her father's wealth and influence, were happy to pay the daughter such attentions as they were sometimes at a loss how to render acceptable to him. Not that Alice was particularly easy to flatter, or even to please, by any direct attempt to do so; but she had a good-natured way of stepping forward to relieve her father from those inappropriate attentions which she knew would be likely to tax his patience, and awaken an irritability of feeling, for which others might not forgive him so readily as she did herself.

"I think we have no need to be discouraged," said Arthur, addressing his companion. "What is your opinion, Miss Clifton, of the signs of the times?"

"We have certainly no need to be discouraged," replied Alice rather coldly, "if the numbers who flock to hear an eloquent speech are any evidence of success."

"And how else," said Arthur, "would you estimate the probabilities of support, except by the interest excited?"

"By the number of good men who are willing to act," replied Alice, "rather than the number of gifted men who are willing to speak, or the number of ignorant ones who are willing to listen—by the purity and the efficacy of the means employed, rather than by the degree of excitement which any means can awaken. I build my hopes not upon the effects which we see, but upon the causes which we know to be in operation; and I trust little even to the thrilling interest which you have this night awakened."

"Nor I, either," said Arthur: "but I confess I do calculate with hope and satisfaction upon that unanimous response of feeling which every public speaker

must gratefully acknowledge, in testimony of his having chosen a subject on which the hearts of the people go along with his own."

"These public testimonials are very deceptive," observed Alice. "The ear is gratified by eloquence, as well as by music; and there are orators who can draw multitudes around them, even when they speak of subjects on which their audience never thought before, and will in all probability never think again."

"Then on what foundation would you build?" asked Arthur.

"On principle," replied Alice, firmly.

"And you would use no means?"

"I do not say that; far from it. I should delight to see good, and wise, and sterling characters of all descriptions, both interested and active in doing good; but I should wish to see their efforts natural, uniform, and consistent with a sound and healthy state of mind; not mere ebullitions of transient enthusiasm, to be followed by weakness and depression."

"Have your remarks any personal application?" inquired Arthur, most ingenuously, and looking at the same time with great earnestness into the countenance of Alice Clifton.

"Perhaps I have no right," replied Alice, "either to make these remarks, or to apply them; but I am so anxious—so distressed—so afraid that you are wasting your strength and your energies."

"Is that all?" asked Arthur, with a look which too clearly revealed the triumph he felt in the consciousness that Alice Clifton was anxious and distressed on his behalf. "Have you no other suspicion of me, than that I am exceeding the bounds of prudence, and overtaxing a constitution that was never very strong? Believe me, I would rather live but a single year to some purpose, than linger out an age, without having made one effort for the good of mankind."

"You mistake me," said Alice, very gravely; "I have other and more painful suspicions of you than this."

"What are they?" asked Arthur with impatience.

"They are such as ought to be told you by a mother, or a sister—not by a stranger, like me."

"You must—indeed you must tell me!" exclaimed Arthur. "I am young, like you, and altogether unpractised in the ways of that great world which we call society. Hitherto my life has been one of thought and feeling. Now that I am called upon to act, how shall I act aright, if those who see my errors, want the candor to point them out?"

"It is not candor that I want," said Alice, "but courage. But we have already conversed too long. I ought not to forget that your time is public property."

Arthur fixed his deep searching eyes upon those of Alice. "I can not thank you, Miss Clifton," said he, "neither would I wish to charge one among my many faults upon you; but whether it is my lot in after life to sink or rise, you must never, as a Christian lady, forget that you neglected the opportunity, and refused to use the power, of making me better than I was."

Before Arthur Middleton had concluded these words, he was addressed by a gentleman at the other end of the table, and the conversation soon becoming general, it turned upon other themes

CHAPTER III.

Morris Clement had descended in no very amiable mood to his late breakfast one morning, when a letter was put into his hand, directed to him by his mother. His head ached violently, he was nervous and dispirited, and little disposed for what he apprehended might be a maternal lecture; he therefore tried to ascertain, by feeling the exact thickness of the letter, whether it contained the bank-notes, of which he was so alarmingly in need. The letter was thick, though closely folded, and a pleasant tingling in the ends of his fingers seemed to convey to his mind the assurance that his wants were about to be supplied. The seal was consequently soon broken—a well-filled sheet was as soon opened, and then another—and that was all. Morris rang violently for his coffee, and then, sinking down in his chair, began to eat his breakfast with what appetite he could command.

"This is worse than all!" said he, muttering to himself; "if she had but sent me five pounds, I could have paid my landlady, and set off to Fearnfield, where I would have made her give up the rest. —She might have sold some barley, or an old horse or two; I am perfectly sure she might have done something; at all events, there is no enduring such a state of things as this."

Such were the cogitations of that beloved son, who was daily, nay, almost hourly, the subject of his mother's fondest thoughts; of her proudest calculations; and sometimes, though far too seldom, of her most fervent prayers. It is true, Mrs. Clement had

lately begun to think him unreasonable in his demands upon her pecuniary resources; but she considered herself not exactly a judge of what a situation like his might require, or what might be requisite to maintain the respect that was due to a young man of talents and acquirements so brilliant as her son's. It was therefore the impossibility of satisfying these demands which constituted the sole ground of their denial, and she had written on the present occasion a confidential and detailed account of the actual state of her pecuniary affairs, not doubting, when her son should be made fully acquainted with her difficulties, that he would prove himself both sympathizing and considerate. She knew what she would have felt for him under such circumstances; she knew also what she had a right to expect from a son so partially and tenderly beloved, and therefore it entered not into her calculations that she could be disappointed.

The letter here alluded to contained, then, a full and clear statement of the heavy losses and scanty gains attendant upon the last few years' farming at Fearnfield, which rendered the continuance of the family there a matter of very questionable prudence; and the anxious widow, who naturally looked to her only son as her truest friend and best adviser, now appealed to his judgment and to his kindly feeling, as to the best means of meeting present difficulties, and providing against those of the future.

Nor would the fond mother have deemed that her appeal had been made in vain, had she seen the anxious brow, and attitude constrained, with which Morris read, or rather glanced over, the contents of her letter; though it is possible her yearning heart might have fainted, had she afterward beheld the manner in which the letter was tossed over to the opposite side of the table, before the expressions of affection with which it concluded had been read.

"Something must be done," said Morris, after he had sent away his breakfast, almost untasted;

and the thought of Alice Clifton at that moment flashed across his mind with more vividness than ever. "Fool that I am," he continued, "not to have been more in earnest—not to have gone with them to their meetings more frequently, and left off wine, and played my part with the brother to more effect! Simple as he is, I am afraid he half suspects me. He has been distant of late, and indeed they have all been rather sparing of their invitations; still, I believe the girl is attached, very seriously attached, and that being the case, what can I have to fear?"

Although Morris Clement uttered this consoling belief aloud, and repeated it to himself more than once, there was a secret misgiving still lurking about his heart, which made him feel anything but comfortable under the idea of a private interview with Alice Clifton, in which his fate should be decided, so far as she was connected with it, at once and for ever.

We have said that Miss Clifton was a young lady with whom no man could advance beyond a certain line of intimacy; and Morris, with all his confidence and self-esteem, had often been made to feel this to a painful and humiliating degree. "If I could but find out her weak point—if I could but make her foolish, or see her thrown off her guard so far as herself to court my attentions, I should feel sure of success;" but none of these symptoms having yet appeared, Morris wisely concluded there might be a bare possibility that the impression he had made was neither deep nor lasting. What, then, was he to do, in the present crisis of his affairs? He first formed his resolution, and, convinced that it was a rash one, had recourse to his accustomed stimulus, to give him courage to act upon it. In pursuance of the plan so hastily formed, he wrote a short letter to his mother, simply stating that he should be with her on the following day. He then sent a note to Henry Clifton, by which he ingeniously contrived to keep him at the office latter than usual that even-

ing, and stating that he had received letters which called him hastily from town, so as to leave him scarcely time to make his adieus at Clifton Villa, though he still cherished the hope of being able to be there about the time of Henry's return.

After these arrangements, Morris set out to call upon a new acquaintance, by whom he was, as he had anticipated, invited to dine; and by the time that social hour arrived, he had so far recovered his self-possession, that not a cloud was to be seen upon his brow.

Precisely at that time of day when Mr. Clifton was known to take the rest which was always necessary to enable him to remain with his family during the remainder of the evening, Morris Clement was heard to knock rather gently at the door of the Villa. His inquiry, of course, was whether Mr. Henry Clifton was at home; and on being told that he had not yet returned, he seemed so much at a loss what to do, that the servant, knowing his intimacy with the family, could not, in common civility, avoid asking him in, assuring him that his young master would not be long.

This was exactly what Morris wanted; and taking his seat with great complacency in the usual sitting-room, he doubted not but the object, at that moment of the deepest interest to him, would soon make her appearance. The servant had closed the door very gently after him, and a deep silence seemed to reign throughout the house. Morris very naturally walked up to the time-piece. The hand stood at seven. By his own contrivance, young Clifton could not be liberated before nine, and consequently Morris esteemed himself a happy man. Happiness, however, is sometimes so capricious as to dally with our hopes when we think our possession of it most secure; and, whether, as Morris fancied, Miss Clifton was giving the finishing and most effective arrangement to her dress, or whether she had not yet adjusted her father's pillows, so as to leave him entirely to

repose, certain it was that she was rather longer than he had expected in giving him a welcome. It is difficult to fill up such intervals of life as these. Books, which sometimes look so interesting, are on such occasions rather dry; and time, which on the one hand appears immeasurably long, because it keeps from us what we wish, on the other—from the certain approach of that which will effectually destroy a precious and long-sought-for opportunity—seems to be compressed into a limit too short for endurance.

Half an hour was already gone, and Morris was in no state of mind to bear anything beyond that with patience. He paced to and fro in the apartment, stopping sometimes beside the bell, and then walking round again, in the hope of hearing some sound, or, at least, of using up another irksome minute. At last he ventured to ring, and a servant appeared.

"Can I speak to Miss Clifton?" said he; "I have a message for her brother, which perhaps may do as well as seeing him himself."

"Miss Clifton is from home, sir," said the servant.

"From home!" exclaimed Morris, somewhat thrown off his guard; "then I will leave a note, if you will bring me pen and ink—or, stay, I have a card."

"Here is ink, sir, on this table," said the servant; "I will take care to give your note to Mr. Henry; but my master, sir, wishes particularly to see you, if convenient to you to wait a few minutes longer."

"Your master?" asked Morris; "I should really be most happy, but I hardly know how, I am so pressed for time;" and, taking out his watch, he added in an undertone, "I leave town early in the morning, and I have yet many persons to see to-night. Present my compliments to your master, and say———

"Ah! my dear sir," exclaimed Morris, for Mr.

Clifton at that moment entered the room, "I really was not anticipating this pleasure, and was just leaving with your servant a message for Mr. Henry, whom I begin to fear I shall not see again before I go into the country."

"When will that be, Mr. Clement?" asked the elder gentleman, rather coldly.

"To-morrow morning, sir," replied the guest; and he almost wished it had been that night—so little did he like the expression of the old gentleman's countenance.

"I am sorry you leave town so soon," observed Mr. Clifton, rather drily.

"Thank you, sir," replied Morris, with a ready smile, and a graceful inclination of the head, as if appropriating a compliment: "I am sorry too; but it is inevitable. My mother is a widow, and affairs of considerable importance devolve upon her, in which it is highly important that I should render her all the assistance in my power."

"So it is," resumed Mr. Clifton: "but how is this, that I never heard you speak of your mother before, and she a widow?"

"Delicacy forbade," said Clement, "that I should intrude the affairs of my family upon you."

"Sir," exclaimed Mr. Clifton, "I never think the worse of a young man for talking about his mother; and I would rather—a thousand times rather—he should say too much, than too little, about his home, his kindred, and his friends. You seem flattered when I tell you I am sorry you leave town so soon; perhaps you will think less of the compliment when I add, that your sudden departure reduces me to the necessity of speaking rather abruptly on a subject which I should have preferred introducing with delicacy and kindness. My daughter———"

"Is it possible," exclaimed Morris, "that you can thus be anticipating my wishes?"

"How—what?" exclaimed Mr. Clifton, in his turn equally astonished; "are you going to explain it all

away? My daughter, I was going to say, if you would have permitted me to proceed, has heard some very unfavorable reports about you, and, whether true or not, they constitute a sufficient reason why your visits to my house should be discontinued; for the friend of my son, Mr. Clement, 'must be above suspicion.' Henry is young; he may be easily led astray. For the sake of his obtaining a thorough knowledge of his profession, I have risked his safety with a master whom I do not intimately know, but I should never have done this, if all his leisure hours had not been spent at home, and it is for his sake only that we now reside near town. The choice of his companions is the next object of importance to me. He will, of course, select them for himself; but I should be an unhappy father, indeed, if, when convinced of their unworthiness, I had not sufficient influence to induce him to give them up."

"Am I to understand, then," asked Morris, grown almost desperate by the present state of affairs, "that this influence is now about to be exercised against me?"

"Not against *you*, most assuredly," replied Mr. Clifton, "but against your intimacy with my son."

"And all because it has amused the ear of a young lady to listen to some gossip's story about me."

"No, sir, not only in consequence of what my daughter has told me: I have other and stronger evidence—I have questioned my son, and, though reluctantly, he has told me the truth, which is, that you are not so temperate as a wise man should, or as a good man must be."

"Judging me by your own rule, I certainly am not; for it troubles not my conscience that I drink wine like the rest of the world."

"Young man," said Mr. Clifton very gravely, "you have never heard any one in my house judged of by what you call our own rule. I know it is peculiar, and I wish not to enforce it beyond my own family, simply as a rule, and without any conviction

of its being a duty. You compel me to go further into this matter than I had intended, and to say, that I neither trust to your principles, nor approve your conduct. Good-night, sir."

"Good-night," said Morris, his cheek flushed with the deepest crimson; and in a few moments he was pacing with quick and haughty strides along the road to London.

The following day was one on which a small number of chosen friends had been invited to dine at Mr. Middleton's, to meet a gentleman of influence and distinction in that portion of the community with which the minister's family were most familiar. The Widow Clement and her daughter Ruth were of this party; and if the mother's brow wore less of anxiety on this day than usual, it was not because her worldly cares were in any way diminished; but because she had of late become increasingly attached to religious society, had associated herself more with the habits and thoughts of persons of this description, and had consequently experienced, from their sympathy and kindness, that support, of which, in her isolated and unprotected situation, she now often felt in need.

Fond of importance, as Mrs. Clement naturally was, perhaps she deceived herself, as many others have done, by simply making a transition of her interests from one subject to another, and, in proportion as her worldly circumstances failed to afford her satisfaction, looking through the same medium upon the more serious requirements of religious duty. Thus, to be placed, if not to place herself, in a conspicuous position in religious society—to be consulted on points of religious interest, and to meet as one of a select party with persons eminent in the religious world—were among the temporal rewards from which the Widow Clement drew an abundant remuneration for all the self-denial she now practised; and when, on the present occasion, she was adorned in her best attire, and led into Mr. Middleton's dining-

room by one of his most honored guests, it would have been difficult to say in what consisted the humiliation of the path she had felt herself called to pursue.

It was not the pleasant party, however, the congenial friends, nor even the respect paid to herself, which alone imparted a glow of joy and pride to the widow's heart that day. She had received the letter from her son, short, but to her most sweet; for it conveyed the assurance that he was hastening to her; and not the most lengthened or elaborate expression of his sympathy could have been so welcome, as this promptitude in acting exactly as she wished. Ruth shared deeply in her mother's delight; and having left word at the inn that the traveller should join them on his arrival, at Mr. Middleton's, she too sat down to table, her countenance beaming with happiness, from the thought, that the beloved one would so soon be dwelling among them again.

It seemed that day as if the Widow Clement's cup of joy was to be filled to overflowing. The gentleman beside whom she was placed at table, knew her son; at least, he knew him in the way of business, and he pleased the company, all of whom were kindly interested in a mother's feelings, by describing how, in a difficult case in which Messrs. Bakewell and Co. were engaged, they depended almost entirely upon the talents of young Clement. He had had to give his evidence on their behalf in a court of justice, and the judge himself had complimented the young man upon the clearness of his answers. "Besides which," added the gentleman, "I have it from Mr. Bakewell himself, that he considers him a young man of extraordinary promise; and I congratulate you, ma'am —I really congratulate you, upon the comfort and support you may reasonable expect from such a son."

Mrs. Clement's handkerchief was raised to her eyes at these words; but there was at the same time a smile upon her lips, which told how necessary, and how natural, were those tears, to express the

fulness of enjoyment such as hers. Ruth wondered why her mother wept, when her own feelings were all exultation at this unqualified testimony in her brother's favor. She knew not that a mother's heart is subject to touches of tenderness beyond what the most affectionate sister can feel.

This then, as we have said before, was one of the Widow Clement's happy days. "And he will come to us here," said she to herself many times before the day was over, "and they will all behold him in his beauty; and they shall see how kind a son he is; and we will walk home together over the fields, and Ruth shall go first and make everything look ready for his return."

One slight interruption to her felicity, and only one, Mrs. Clement experienced. It was when Mr. Middleton addressed her in an under tone on the subject of her son's religious character; asking, with as much delicacy as he could, whether she had any reason to suppose that he was under serious impressions.

"Why, yes," said the mother, with painful embarrassment, "I have thought of late—at least I have hoped—"

"Or rather you have wished," observed Mr. Middleton, slightly smiling. "Well, my dear madam, we must not despair. London is a place of great temptation. You must get him home, Mrs. Clement; and when we have him among us again, we will try what can be done."

Mr. Middleton at this moment turned away to speak to another guest; and while he did so, an unusually loud knock was heard at the door.

"It is my brother!" exclaimed Ruth; and, starting from her seat, she rushed out into the hall. Mrs. Clement, though her heart was beating violently, thought it more decorous to remain; besides which, she rather wished the company to see the meeting between herself and her son. But why was the youth so long in coming? Perhaps his sister had been mistaken in his knock. No, there was the

sound of his manly voice, and his step, hesitating, no doubt, to join a party, after so long a journey. The company grew expectant. A general silence prevailed. A pleading kind of voice was heard in the passage, no doubt persuading him to come in. At last he came!

Was it the heat of the summer's sun—the dust of the public road? Had he been ill? Was a fever distracting his brain? All these ideas, like so many flashes of lightning, shot athwart the mother's soul; and gladly would she at that moment have clung to any one of them, even had its touch been death. But the truth—the horrible truth—it would reveal itself. There was no shutting it out; and there stood her son, in the midst of that goodly company, unblushing, and most hideous to behold.

Morris Clement had for the last year of his life, and probably for a longer period than that, been gradually falling into habits of intemperance, of which he saw not the danger, and of which also he believed that none knew the extent. It was strange, that one so quick-sighted as he had always been to the folly of others, should be willing on any occasion to surrender his power of self-mastery for the mere gratification of an animal appetite. It was strange, that one who could laugh in his turn at the absurdities which other men committed under such circumstances, should voluntarily commit the same. Yet so it was; and he whose pride was in his intellect, and in the influence which intellect is calculated to obtain, was often seen to act the part of a mere buffoon, and to make himself the laughing-stock of the company in which he mixed.

Mr. Bakewell was fully aware of his propensity, and for this reason alone had ceased to trust to Morris Clement any affairs of importance; for, though his skill and management had on many occasions been most serviceable to his employers, there were others when his assistance had more than failed them, entirely from this humiliating cause. Thus

he had obtained among men of business, and even among those who were by no means scrupulous on points of morality, a kind of questionable character—as a person not to be depended upon—as one who was clever enough, if he would use his abilities; but, in short, as a young man not eligible to any place of trust.

Morris himself was irritated beyond measure whenever he heard any of these insinuatious. He was aware of the nature of his habits, but he never doubted their being such as he could change at any hour of his life. The simple question why he did not change them, since it was so easy, might perhaps have opened his eyes to the real state of the case, and have convinced him that it was becoming more and more difficult every day to make this important change; that he was becoming in reality the slave of a momentary inclination, and that the chains of a cruel tyrant were entwining themselves with his very being.

To those who indulge themselves in what they consider a slight measure of intemperance, the days of trouble and perplexity are those of temptation too. Had unclouded prosperity been the portion of Morris Clement, had no disappointment embittered his thoughts, and no unexpected failure of ambitious hopes thrown him back upon his own mental resources, it is possible he would never have overstepped, to any great extent, the bounds of propriety in this respect. But the state of his mother's circumstances, and more particularly of his own, for his debts were becoming very considerable, presented to his imagination a picture by no means agreeable to contemplate; and, naturally fond of a novel scheme, a bold enterprise, or an arduous undertaking, his temper and disposition were but ill calculated to brook disappointment or defeat. Young as he was, however, he had lately been compelled to experience both; and never more painfully than in the failure of his hopes with regard to the Clifton family; for though

self-love still whispered that the lady herself was not indifferent, he knew too well the strong principles of the family, or, as he called them, their narrow prejudices, to venture any advances toward their favor, the success of which would depend upon the purity of his morals, or the general correctness of his character. Thus, then, he was completely at a loss how to calculate upon the future; and, wounded and irritated, he had turned his back upon the great metropolis, as upon a place in which he had found enemies, rather than friends. Still, with a mind unused to sadness, he could not—he would not—sink under this blow; and the cheerful spirits which he was unable to command by any natural means, he forced again into exercise by that fatal stimulus which had of late become his too frequent resource.

It had never once occurred to Morris Clement, on his journey from town, that he should have to make his appearance that day in any other house than his mother's; and, believing that he should find a welcome there under any circumstances, he had regaled himself by the way, to his heart's content. On arriving at the inn where he was to leave the London coach, he had just sense enough to understand the message that had been left for him, though he was far from having a sufficiently clear idea of the actual state of things to prevent his exposing himself before his mother's friends, as above described. The fact was, he felt, as most persons do under such circumstances, fit for any society, and capable of being an ornament to all; and therefore it was, that he hesitated not to walk directly into the drawing-room, among the guests of the Middletons.

We have said that Mrs. Clement was a woman not easily thrown off her guard. Perhaps her self-possession was never more put to the test than on the present occasion. It might be that the greatness of the demand called forth a proportionate effort, for even now it did not fail her; and rising hastily from her seat, she laid hold of the arm of her son with so

firm a grasp that he flinched under it, and thus she half guided, and half forced him, to quit the room along with her.

What followed their departure, neither Mrs. Clement nor Ruth looked back to see; for they were soon walking along the street of that little busy town, where many eyes were upon them, in the broad light of a summer's evening, with that degraded but obtrusive object leaning upon an arm of each. And it was there, too, in that little town, past all those public windows, where the proud mother had so often walked to the minister's door, looking this way, and that, to meet the recognition of those who she thought must envy her that noble son. It was there she now walked, beholding nothing, and heeding nothing, except the one-absorbing agony that filled her soul.

"Had we not better go by the fields?" asked Ruth, very meek'y, and half afraid; for she had seen a group of rude men amusing themselves at their expense.

"No," replied her mother firmly, "we must go by the public road; we shall never be able to guide him over the bridge."

So they went by the broad way, encountering some of Mrs. Clement's own laborers returning from their work, and other passengers, many of whom looked more amused than grieved, at what is, in reality, one of the most sorrowful spectacles which human life presents—an immortal being who has voluntarily destroyed that portion of his nature which alone distinguished him from the brute.

By the time Mrs. Clement, and her almost helpless charge had reached their home at Fearnfield, Morris had in some measure recovered the use of his senses; and throwing himself down into the arm-chair which had been his father's, and which always stood in the old parlor of the farmhouse, he looked up into his mother's face with an expression of countenance half serious and half comic, as if some dim

visions of the actual folly he had committed was mingling in his mind, with the last dregs of that animal excitement which still induced him to laugh at what were a far fitter subject for tears. It is possible it was this very laughter, so wild, and strange, and inappropriate, so utterly unlike the sweet echo of his boyish mirth, to which a mother's ear so often had been turned, which at last overcame the fortitude of Mrs. Clement; for she threw her arms around the neck of her son, and, leaning her cheek upon his forehead, wept like a child.

What was it to her at that moment that he was an object of loathing and disgust to others! what was it to her that his manly beauty was gone! what was it to her that a shadow like blackness was upon his eyes, that his lips were distorted, and that his voice had lost every thrill of music from its tone? It was only so much, that it drew her closer to his side, in order that she might shield him, as it were, with the brooding wings of love, and prove, by the warmth with which she held him to her bosom, that there was one heart—and perhaps only one in the whole world—to which he was, if possible, more dear than ever. Yes, there was something like a proud consciousness of the power of true affection, and of the magnitude of the trial it had withstood, mingled together in that mute embrace; and, while the mother's arms still hung around her treasure, there was no language but that of secret prayer, commensurate either with the agony or the tenderness of her overburdened soul.

Morris Clement, though all the while unconscious of the depth or the acuteness of his mother's feelings, appeared at least to be softened by her tears; and when Ruth brought in, and placed before him, the refreshment she had prepared, he spoke kindly to them both, and even assured them, in a broken and incoherent manner, that he felt some compunction at having acted with such egregious folly.

Soothed by this confession, for the sorrowful heart

is too poor in consolation to reject the meanest trifle, Mrs. Clement sat down beside her son; and while the shadows of evening spread around them, happily obscuring his altered look, and uncertain manner; while the moonbeams stole through the lattice of the ancient window; and especially while the world was shut out, so that no one could look in with mockery or contempt; a sort of sad cheerfulness—just that which is produced by the first slight amelioration of excessive sorrow—diffused itself around that hospitable board, and made the evening close in with less of bitterness than might have been anticipated.

Morris Clement was one of those unfortunate beings whose hearts seem opened, and whose tempers are softened, by a slight degree of intemperance. Thus his gay friends never liked his society so well, as when he was in this situation; and thus his poor mother was led to entertain a fond hope that even the very act of gross extravagance which had plunged her into such overwhelming sorrow, might be the means of establishing between herself and her son a greater degree of confidence and freedom of communication than she had lately experienced. What then was her disappointment and chagrin, on meeting him the following morning, to find that he was more than usually reserved, and that of all the subjects on which he forced himself to converse, the transactions of the previous day were most scrupulously avoided. To be alone, either with his mother or his sister, seemed now the last thing he desired; and gladly laying hold of any excuse that might afford him a plea for being absent from the house, he undertook the management of a high-spirited pony then in the hands of the trainer, and to this object he devoted the greatest portion of his time, simply because he had no other, and because it served in some measure to divert his thoughts from subjects on which he could not dwell without humiliation and pain.

Of all the minister's family, Rose Middleton was

the only one who visited at Fearnfield during the following week, and that was only once for a morning call, and without saying to any one at home where she intended to go. Ruth, who had seen her friend approaching, ran out to meet her with the accustomed welcome; but when the first words of cordial greeting were over, they were followed by a silence most unusual between two young persons of their age and sex.

"We had better speak out," said Rose at last, "for I suppose we are both thinking of the same thing—this unfortunate affair of your brother's. Do you know, Ruth," she continued, looking with her usual vivacity into the face of her friend—"do you know, that, in spite of myself, I can hardly help laughing sometimes, to think it should have happened just at such a time, and in such a scene. And your poor dear mother, Ruth, she had been so good all day—so mightily correct—and so proud of her son!"

"Laughing!" exclaimed Ruth, standing still with astonishment, "laughing!" she repeated. "Oh! Rose, if you knew the misery of last evening to my poor mother and me!"

"I dare say," resumed her friend, "it was very uncomfortable, but it was ridiculous notwithstanding; and, after all, I don't see it quite in so bad a light as some others do."

"What can you mean, dear Rose?" said Ruth, still more astonished than before; "I am ignorant what *is* bad, if this is not."

"Oh, yes! bad enough, to be sure, in one sense," replied Rose, "but really, between ourselves, Ruth, I do not see that what he has done is so very much worse than what others do every day. I will tell you what struck me very much on that sad night, for sad it was, unquestionably; and I am sure I felt for you all, from my heart. No sooner were you gone, than a general lamentation burst forth from the company; and very sorry, I dare say, they all were; and many of them spoke very kindly of you and your

mother, though I thought some remarks were a little too severe upon Morris. Well, as I said, they lamented, and condoled, and said such proper things, you have no idea, about the evils of intemperance, and about the habit being corrected in time; and then, when the hour of separation approached, they all took a little of what your brother had been taking too much of; and some took a little more for consolation, because they were so shocked and so sorry, they could not bear themselves. And my father, when he had taken his brandy-and-water, began to talk still more, though it was all in a very good strain; yet I could not help thinking there was something wrong in all this—something inconsistent, at least—something that fell hardly upon those who are exposed to greater temptations."

Ruth answered not, but walked straight onward with her eyes bent upon the ground: it was the first time the idea had struck her mind, that there was injustice and cruelty in sanctioning that indulgence to the strong, which may be fatally injurious to the weak. She was not one to hesitate, from any selfish consideration, when the path of duty was made clear; and stopping suddenly beside the gate of her mother's garden, she held out her hand to her friend, saying, in a solemn and impressive manner, "Dear Rose, let you and I lay down a fresh rule for our own lives, and act upon it from this hour. For the sake of my poor brother, and of others who may be laboring under his temptations, let neither of us touch henceforth what to us may perhaps be innocent, but what is not so to them."

Rose Middleton laughed out. "So you think," said she, "our influence with the young men is so great, that we, of our two selves, can turn them from the error of their ways, when all the world, and almost all good men into the bargain, would still be on their side. Ah! Ruth, I never detected your vanity before; now I see what an ambitious and presuming girl you are."

Ruth blushed deeply; but it was less with shame at the idle bantering of her friend, than at the sudden revulsion her feelings had experienced from her cold-hearted sarcasm, so inappropriate at such a time.

"Forgive me," said Ruth, the tears starting to her eyes, "for thinking to draw you into my scheme; I forgot that you had not the same cause with myself to make this matter a personal, a religious duty."

"I forgive you most freely," replied Rose, "and the more so because you have not succeeded; for I assure you I have no wish to be better than my neighbors; and the rule which my father and mother think right, and which I have been brought up to from my cradle, must be strict enough for me."

The fair speaker had scarcely uttered these words, when the dashing figure of Morris Clement was seen riding up on his new and beautiful pony. Perfectly conscious that he looked well on horseback, he was in no haste to alight; and, charmed with the easy and cordial manner of Rose Middleton, by which no symptoms of estrangement were evinced, he readily fell in with her lively kind of chat, which, upon the whole, was far more to his taste than the serious conversation of Alice Clifton had ever been. Rose was, in his estimation, too, far prettier; and he only wished her charms could have been enhanced by a fortune like that which it was reported Mr. Clifton was able to bestow upon his daughter.

This pleasant and social interview between Rose Middleton and her friend's brother, proved not to be the last of the kind. It so happened that they often met in the fields, or about the outskirts of the town; and while, on the one hand, the conviction that such meetings would not be approved by her family, gave them a sort of romantic and interesting character to Rose; the fact that she was willing, nay, more than willing, to meet him on such terms, afforded a very natural gratification to the vanity of Morris.

It was on a beautiful sunny morning in the month

of July, that Rose Middleton had one day wandered alone to the brow of a hill, round which wound the public road, commanding, from rather a perilous eminence, a rich and extensive view of the surrounding country. Tired with the lengthened ascent, and at the same time delighted with the prospect of the far-stretching hills and valleys spread before her, Rose had seated herself upon a point of jutting rock, and was idly forming a bouquet of the wild-flowers which grew around her, when, suddenly turning the point of the hill, Morris Clement appeared—not, as she expected, on his high-spirited pony, but quietly seated in a carriage, which it seemed to be drawing with ease and safety up the hill.

"Who would have thought of seeing you in that sober style?" exclaimed Rose.

"Sober, indeed," replied Morris; "you must never again dispute my power of bringing others into subjection. Look at this pony; it was but a week ago that I tried it for the first time in harness, and now you may lead it like a lamb."

"Many things may be led which can not be driven," said Rose, laughing; "I would rather go before, than be compelled to follow, even this lamb of yours."

"But you will ride with me this morning, will you not? I have brought the carriage on purpose."

"May I ask whose carriage it is, before I trust myself in it?"

"That can make little difference with a weight like yours; but, if you must know, it is borrowed of a neighbor of my mother's, a very worthy sort of man. Make haste, if you please, the animal goes well enough, but has not patience to stand."

"I dare not," said Rose, withdrawing her foot from the step; "and besides, it will look so foolish, if we should meet any one."

"Oh, if that be your reason," replied Morris, rather piqued, "I perfectly understand you, and can not say another word."

"No, no, you don't understand me," said Rose, again advancing: "it was not that I meant."

Her arm was now seized by Morris—for he knew, better than he had chosen to describe, the excitable nature of the animal he had ventured to drive—and placing her by that momentary effort in the carriage beside him, they drove down the hill with a rapidity which made the color alternately fade and flush in the cheeks of the adventurous heroine. The speed at which they travelled, the sound of the wheels, the rattling of the harness, and the strangeness of the affair altogether, had, as might have been expected, a startling effect upon the unaccustomed animal; and, dashing forward with two or three wild and irregular bounds, it showed its determination to burst from all further restraint, by plunging and kicking most violently. In this state the carriage appeared to be almost literally tossed from one side of the road to the other, until poor Rose, insensible from the effects of excessive fear, was at last thrown out upon a stony bank, while the furious animal—the rein having been for a moment relaxed—galloped off with her companion, and was soon beyond the reach of her voice, had she indeed retained the power to call for help.

It was impossible for Morris now to stop, and it would have been worse than folly had he thrown himself from the carriage while the horse was going at full speed. Heartless as it seemed, to leave a delicate female in the situation in which he had caught a momentary glimpse of Rose, he had no help for it; and, perhaps, after all, he did not suffer so much as many would have done under such circumstances. Had he known that their first interview, and their subsequent descent from the brow of the hill, had been observed by a kind-hearted stranger, who was passing leisurely along the valley below, his mind would have been relieved from some portion of its uneasiness; for he would have known that even a stranger could not have witnessed such an accident

without hastening to the spot, to offer his own services, or to seek for help from others.

Such, indeed, had been the case; and when the first dawn of consciousness passed over the brow and lips of Rose Middleton, she was supported by this stranger beneath the massive foliage of spreading boughs, which stretched out above a hollow in the rocks by the wayside, and sheltered from the noon-day sun a little fountain of clear water that welled out continually from the broken and many-teinted stone.

"My mother!" were the first words to which Rose gave utterance; and then she looked again into the unknown countenance that still leaned over her, and around upon that cold and cheerless place, while a vague sense of wanting some, or rather all, of the many comforts by which she was wont to be surrounded, forced the tears of a natural and almost childish grief into her eyes.

"You are perfectly safe," said the stranger, in a kind and soothing tone; and then she saw that he had been employed in bathing her temples with water from that crystal stream; but she knew not the anxiety with which he had borne her to that place, and watched her closed and marble lips until they moved again, and he saw that life was still there. With the natural quickness of woman to apprehend such trifles, Rose felt only that he had parted far back her beautiful hair; and raising her head, and shaking forward her rich and shining tresses, she experienced a sort of secret pleasure in feeling that she was looking again as she ought to look.

But who could that strange man be? for he was the sort of person upon whom, without for one moment questioning his respectability, one hardly bestows the epithet of gentleman. He was at least thirty years of age; and though by no means handsome, there was that in his voice and in his countenance, which made the ear listen, and the heart trust to him at once.

"As soon as you are able to walk," said he, "I will conduct you to the nearest cottage, and then, if you will favor me with your name, you shall have your own friends around you."

Rose was even now able to speak of her name and her family, but she was not quite sure that she wished any of her friends to be sent for. Indeed, she had but just the moment before recollected under what circumstances she must appear among them again; and the idea was so truly appalling in her present weak and helpless state, that she covered her face with her hands, and gave way to a violent fit of hysterical weeping.

Unable to understand the mystery of her case, or to cope with the many difficulties it presented, the stranger now retreated a few paces back; when Rose involuntarily looked up through her tears, and most ingenuously entreated him not to leave her.

"I have done nothing wrong," said she, "only been rather foolish; but yet I dare not go home by myself; my father—my mother—they will all be so angry."

"Have you no female friend," asked the stranger, "whom I could bring to you?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Rose, clapping her hands together, "there is Ruth Clement, at the farm of Fearnfield; I am sure she would come to me in a moment, and wherever I might be."

"I know something of the Clements," replied the stranger; "I will conduct you, then, to a place of safety, and bring your friend to you as quickly as possible."

Rose Middleton was already able to walk with a little assistance to a cottage hard by, where she was no sooner committed to the care of the woman of the house, than the stranger set off on the kindest errand he could now undertake for her, taking with him a few lines from Rose herself, written with a trembling hand, as a warrant for the truth of his story.

It is possible he might have repented by the way,

of having engaged himself so deeply in an affair of so romantic a character with two young ladies, or he might have thought, that as all danger was over, there was no longer occasion for his services or his interference. However this might be, an empty chaise was sent to Fearnfield, with a request that the note which the driver conveyed might be attended to immediately,

Mrs. Clement was not at home when the message arrived, or she would in all probability have objected to her daughter's acting upon so strange a request; but Ruth, who well knew the handwriting of her friend, hesitated not a moment, and in the course of half an hour she had placed that friend beside her in the carriage, and was hearing, on their way home, all the strange incidents of her fearful story.

"And did no strange man come with the carriage?" asked Rose.

"No; it was sent from the town by a gentleman whom the driver, I think, said he did not know."

"Nay, you are wrong there, Ruth; for if he had been a gentleman, he would have come for me himself."

"Well, a man then, as you are pleased to call him; but, for my part, I think he has acted a kinder part, or at least a more delicate one, by disappearing from the scene of action altogether. I only wish I could claim his services a little further, to look after poor Morris."

"Has your brother not arrived yet?" asked Rose —and perhaps it was a little strange that she had not asked this question before.

"No," replied Ruth, very sorrowfully; "and glad as I am to have you again in safety beside me, I can not rest, or think of anything else, until I have my brother too."

"But that strange man;" said Rose again. "I can not imagine who he was. Sometimes he seemed so kind, and then so distant; I never felt so much afraid

of a man in my life, and yet I was more afraid of being left alone."

"A bandit chief, I suppose," observed Ruth.

"A bandit chief!" exclaimed Rose, laughing. "I wish you could have seen him: you would have been divided between a cattle-dealer and an itinerant preacher. Perhaps he was both."

"See! see!" exclaimed Ruth, starting up, and clapping her hands with exultation, as they came in sight of Fearnfield; "there is Morris standing at the door. Now I am happy indeed!"

"Even without finding out my cattle-dealer?" said Rose. "But stay, I will make one more trial;" and, stretching her head from the window of the chaise, she asked the driver who the gentleman was by whom the carriage had been ordered.

"I can not at this time call to mind his name," said the man, looking as if he knew everything else about him.

"Where does he live, then?" asked Rose.

"Why, that I can't tell you either," said he. "All I know is, that he attends the market at ———, puts up at the Black Bull, and buys a quantity of cattle."

"Then he is a cattle-dealer, after all," said Rose, sinking back in the carriage, with a look of profound disappointment.

"Is the man any worse for that?" asked her friend.

The next moment the horses stopped at Mrs. Clement's garden-gate; and Ruth, whose heart was full of gratitude, rushed in to tell her mother all that happened, while Morris assisted Rose into the house; for, though not seriously hurt, she was a little too much shaken, both in mind and body, to be able to move in her accustomed light and easy manner.

"Look!" exclaimed Mrs. Clement, pointing to the door, "the man is driving off, and we have not paid him. Run, Morris, and call him to stop."

Morris hastened out, and having succeeded in

making the man hear, a short parley ensued; after which, he returned to the house to tell the strange tidings that the chaise had been paid for.

"Paid for!" exclaimed all at once.

"Yes; paid for by the person whose name the man can not recollect."

"Then he is a gentleman, after all!" exclaimed Rose, with evident satisfaction.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE is a class of persons, well known to all who have had much experience in the common affairs of life, who seem to carry a train of troubles along with them from the cradle to the grave. Not that they are themselves peculiarly liable to affliction; did they feel more, they would perhaps endeavor to make others feel less. The description given of such persons, in common parlance, is, that they are born beneath an unlucky star; and it would almost seem that a peculiar fate was upon them, for, without anything bordering upon malignity in their own nature, and certainly without any definite determination to do evil rather than good, they are perpetually involving even their nearest and dearest connexions in perplexity on their behalf, and often in difficulty and loss. If persons of this class borrow a horse, they are almost sure to throw it down; if they hire a carriage, a shaft is broken, or a wheel thrown off; if they transact business for others, their employers fail; if for themselves, the consequences are still more calamitous.

Though far from insinuating, in the case of Morris Clement, that he was an agent in such disasters as these, without any culpability attaching to himself, yet, in the aggregate of calamity which his conduct brought upon a partial and injudicious mother, it is not the less certain that he had no deliberate intention at all adequate to the consequences of each individual act, among the many which formed subjects of reproach or regret among his friends, according to their degree of attachment to himself, and the lenient

manner in which they regarded the conduct of young men in general.

The affair of the borrowed carriage already recorded, though not the cause of any personal injury, and so far less calamitous than might have been expected, was still, to the widow, with her failing resources, a disaster of no trifling importance. The carriage had been entirely dashed to pieces; and though Morris amused himself by pointing out the frailty of the different fragments, and arguing that the whole, even before its dismemberment, was utterly worthless, his mother shook her head, for she well knew that a carriage is a carriage, so long as it holds together, and that nothing can more effectually enhance its former value than the fact of its being totally destroyed in another person's hands. Mrs. Clement, too, was one who made a strict point of standing well with her neighbors. She herself was never known either to lend or borrow, and she could as little afford to purchase a new carriage to supply the loss occasioned by her son's imprudence, as she could bring her spirit to settle quietly down under an obligation so irksome as that of having first used, and then destroyed, the property of another.

It would appear strange, were it not a part of our heterogeneous nature, that the Widow Clement still continued to love, with the tenderest affection, a son whose feelings and habits were so entirely opposed to her own, and to love him, as it would seem, in proportion to the extent of this difference. But so it was; and she was not the first woman whose heart has turned away from what was genial, comforting, and secure, to wreck its peace upon that which seemed formed to be its torment.

Day after day Mrs. Clement watched the eye of her son, in order to engage his attention, while she unburdened the whole weight of her sorrows. Day after day she followed him a little way out into the fields, until his active step had gained too great a distance for her voice to reach his ear. At last she

spoke directly to him, when he could not well escape, and the consequence was, a long deliberation upon the ways and means by which the respectability of the family was to be supported.

Ruth had been a silent listener while this consultation was carried on, and all seemed equally at a loss for an expedient, for the farming affairs at Fearnfield were just then in so low a state that it appeared little less than madness to talk of continuing them without any material alteration; and to every entreaty of the mother's that her son would come and settle down in the country, and take upon himself the entire management of her business, he replied, with impatience and disgust, that he knew no more about farming than his dog, and that he was not going to bury himself in such a place as that.

"Don't you think it a pretty place?" asked Ruth with great simplicity.

"Pretty enough, for what it is," was the reply.

"Is London prettier?" asked Ruth again; but her brother did not condescend to answer so childlike an inquiry; and the consultation went on, though with little more success than before, and a long silence ensued, during which Morris rose and walked to the window, where he whistled and adjusted his hair by the reflection of his figure upon the panel of the old window-shutter in the deep recess into which the sun was shining.

"I have been thinking, mother," said Ruth at last, and this time she was not interrupted, for no one else had anything to say—"I have been thinking that I might assist you."

'In what way?" inquired Mrs. Clement, with a tone of voice which implied little confidence in any plan proposed by her daughter.

"I have been thinking I might learn a business," continued Ruth.

"A business!" exclaimed the mother and the son with one voice; and then the latter whistled out his tune.

You know I am no scholar," resumed the simple-hearted speaker.

"Certainly not," observed Morris, and whistled again.

"And so I have been thinking," said Ruth, "that I might learn the business of a dressmaker."

"And practise it here among haymakers and harvest people?" interrupted Mrs. Clement.

"No, no, you don't understand me," said Ruth again; "I only mean to spare you the trouble and expense of maintaining me. You know I was always quick with my hands, and if I became clever in the business, surely I could get a situation as assistant with somebody in London, or elsewhere."

At this observation, Morris Clement condescended to look round. "I don't think that suggestion of Ruth's at all bad," he said; "and she could make me my shirts, by working over-hours."

"Yes, and my mother's caps," exclaimed Ruth, who began to be really pleased at the respect with which her proposal was treated by her brother.

It so happened, however, that this proposal gained ground with those to whose interests it offered a powerful appeal; and Ruth Clement, who in her girlish heroism knew not the real nature of the sacrifice she was about to make, found herself, in the course of a few days, preparing, with her mother's consent, and her brother's approbation, for that most dubious of all grades of human life, and that least enviable of any—a dressmaker's apprentice in London.

It is probable this scheme would scarcely have appeared feasible, had there not been a relative of Mrs. Clement's carrying on a very flourishing business in this line in the metropolis; or rather, one whose account of her own transactions in the fashionable world occasionally startled the inhabitants of Fearnfield, when she came down for a day in the country, to tell how dresses were worn in town, to smell the new-mown hay, and to take back to the

city her hands full of garden-flowers, destined to drag out the remnant of their existence in the window of her front parlor at No. 2.

Nor was the novel destination to which poor Ruth was consigned, the only change which circumstances rendered necessary at Fearnfield. In consequence of the determination of Morris not to bury himself in the country, Mrs. Clement at last decided upon a step which had been proposed to her, of disposing of her farm to a gentleman of great respectability in the neighborhood; and he being an unmarried man, without mother or sister to superintend his domestic affairs, an arrangement was entered into, by which the widow should remain as nominal mistress of the home she had so long called her own.

It is astonishing how little we are affected by those changes which leave us still occupants of our accustomed places, surrounded by the same familiar objects, and in all outward circumstances the same.

Morris Clement rode gayly away from the door of his paternal home, never again to find it a home to him; and his mother turned into the old parlor with a tear in her eye; but yet with a look of as much dignity, and with a feeling of satisfaction almost as complete, as when the whole premises were called her own. Ruth was the only one who really felt the change; and she felt it the more, because the person who had come to take possession of the farm, was a man of grave and distant habits, who, though exceedingly respectful to her mother, neither said nor did anything to make her understand that he thought she had a right to be there.

"And what is the name of the new master of Fearnfield?" said Rose Middleton to her friend, one day, as they walked over the fields to the farm.

"Austin Elliot," was the short reply.

"The next thing I must ask, is how you like him?" continued Rose, "for you seem determined to tell me nothing unless I do ask."

"We like him of course," replied Ruth. "He is

a good man, I believe, and reads his Bible very diligently."

"And it follows, of course, that you like him?" asked Rose, laughing.

"It ought to follow," said Ruth; "but—"

"But what? I am sure there is something about him you do not like. Now, tell me what is the matter; for he must be very disagreeable, if you do not like him, when he is so good."

"I think," said Ruth, "but I am not quite sure—I think he is cold-hearted and severe."

"In what way?"

"He is so very abstemious. He never allows himself the least indulgence that can be done without."

"Does he never drink wine?"

"No; nor even beer."

"What a stingy man he must be! But, after all, this is only being hard-hearted to himself. Does he give nothing away?"

"Yes; there is a poor old woman ill in the lane, to whom he sends a part of his dinner every day."

"Most likely for ostentation," observed Rose; and thus the two friends amused themselves with all the evidence they could bring against the stranger, until they reached the door of the farmhouse, when Rose looked about her with some curiosity, in the hope of being able to draw her own conclusions from personal observation.

It was some time before Mr. Elliot appeared, and when he did, the sudden start, and heightened color on the cheek of Rose, betrayed an emotion for which her friend was altogether at a loss to account, more especially as the stranger himself appeared unconscious of any cause for extraordinary excitement.

"He is the very man," said Rose to her friend, after having made an excuse for calling her to a remote part of the room.

"What man?" asked Ruth.

"My cattle-dealer, if you like to call him so."

"Impossible!"

"The very same, I assure you. And yet he does not choose to know me."

"Perhaps he waits until you choose to know him."

"Then he shall wait a little longer," said Rose, tossing back her shining ringlets, and advancing to the table with an air of haughty indifference, for she was really piqued that an interview, which she considered as bearing so romantic a character, should have been already forgotten, so far at least as related to herself; and if her woman's heart had been more deeply fathomed, there would probably have been found concealed in some of its recesses, a very natural surprise that her own personal charms should have made so slight an impression. She forgot, in the moment of her wounded vanity, that her interview with Mr. Elliot had been of such a nature, that delicacy on his part forbade his public recognition of her as a former acquaintance, unless she herself had given him to understand that such recognition would be agreeable.

"Does Mr. Elliot ever walk out with you?" asked Rose, looking back to the house as she and her friend passed out of the garden, to pursue their evening walk to the town.

"Never," said Ruth, and dismissed the subject with great indifference, for she was thinking, that was, in all probability, the last time she would ever accompany Rose Middleton back to her father's house, over those fields, and along those grassy pathways, so familiar to her step that she could almost have gone blindfold all the way. And not to her step only, for the sound of the greensward beneath her foot, the song of the blackbird in the hedge-row tree, the scent of the hawthorn, and the rustling of the thick corn as she passed by, were all parts of that home-feeling, which, to an isolated being like herself, but little valued, and less understood, con-

stituted nearly all her little portion of earthly happiness.

There are no creatures on earth so indifferent, inattentive, and apparently heartless, as young ladies who are just beginning to interest themselves in what is called an affair of the heart.

"I shall be in London this day next week," said Ruth.

"That must be Mr. Elliot!" exclaimed Rose: "Look yonder; who else can it be?"

"I wonder what makes my brother like London so much better than the country," observed Ruth.

"Do you think Mr. Elliot will join us, if we go that way?" asked Rose, "it really grows very late, and I do not half like that shady lane after the sun has set."

"We can go by the public road," said Ruth, smiling: for she thought, if her friend was afraid in consequence of the lateness of the hour; what was to become of her, who had all her steps to retrace from the town to the farm? It was not the habit of Rose, however, to think much about anybody but herself; and when her friend bid her goodnight, after Mr. Elliot had very politely joined them, she never once expressed her concern that she should have to walk home alone.

Ruth Clement had not expected, still less had she wished, that Mr. Elliot should feel the slightest anxiety about her safety; yet had her own thoughts been less absorbing, she might very naturally have wondered why a gentleman should think the young lady who had but a hundred yards to go, more in need of protection than another who had to walk a mile. In the present instance, however, this seeming disproportion in the attentions of the gentleman, proved equally acceptable to both friends; for Ruth was fond of the twilight hour, and she spent so much of her time alone, and kept so many of her thoughts to herself, that solitude and silence seemed to be the element in which she lived. Still there was on this

occasion a more than usual proportion of sadness mingling with her secret thoughts. It is so melancholy a thing to go away without being regretted, that there is but one circumstance in life which can weigh against it, and that is—to return without a welcome.

"I don't wish them to be distressed," said Ruth, speaking her feelings aloud, as she leaned upon the stile that was nearest home, "that would pain me very much; but I should like somebody to be a little sorry that I am going away."

Ruth had scarcely uttered these words, when her attention was attracted by a low mournful whine, and looking over the stile, she saw in the pathway her brother's dog, which, though considered his property, and subject to his authority, had always been dependant upon her care and kindness. And now it seemed almost as if the poor animal had a presentiment of its loss, for it looked up into her face most pitifully; and when she spoke again, its distress burst forth into a perfect howl.

"Poor Die," said Ruth, "will nobody care for you when I am gone?" and seating herself upon a bank, the dog lay down beside her with its head upon her lap, and they neither of them stirred from the spot until the moon rose above the orchard trees which grew around the garden at Fearnfield.

It was a beautiful evening—the air so pure and still, the sky so serene, and the wide flowers and thickly growing herbs so fresh and fragrant with the dew—the cattle were all so peacefully at rest, the village sounds so hushed, while the sombre woods and deep shadows of scattered trees which lay here and there contrasted with the white moonlight, looked so perfectly in harmony with beauty and repose, that it would have been scarcely possible at such an hour, not to resign the mind to an imaginary sense of the strongly prevailing presence of goodness and mercy, and, as a natural consequence, of safety and protection.

"I should never be afraid in the country," thought Ruth; yet at the same moment she belied her words by starting suddenly from the ground, at the sound of a brisk footstep, brushing the dew from the grass along the pathway to the stile.

"This is a late hour for you, Miss Clement," said Austin Elliot.

"It is," replied Ruth, "but I am about to leave the country so soon, that I feel anxious to enjoy all I can of it both by day and night."

"Your friend looks delicate, I think," he continued. "Is she so?"

"Oh, no, not in the least. We think her the picture of health."

"Constitutions like hers are often misunderstood," observed the gentleman, "she appeared excessively fatigued on reaching home."

"You need not be under any apprehension about that," replied Ruth, "she would have walked back again with the greatest ease, had there been any inducement for doing so."

"Another proof," said the gentleman, somewhat sullenly, "that those who see us the most frequently are the least watchful of our little ailments."

"I do assure you again," exclaimed Ruth, more earnestly, "that Rose Middleton has no ailments whatever, except such as a little self-discipline might correct."

"I would ask you what those are," said Austin Elliot, "but that I should be the last person in the world to make a friend become evidence against a friend."

"You ought, at any rate," said Ruth, "to ask me for a catalogue of her virtues first."

"And if I should not feel more pleasure in discovering them myself, I would."

"But are you sure that you are a proper judge? Is there not a remote possibility that your perceptions, though clear on other subjects, may be a little at fault here?"

Whether Austin blushed at this suggestion or not, was impossible to say; but one thing was evident, from the tone of his voice, that he felt both interest and pleasure in the turn which the conversation had taken, and he looked upon Ruth ever afterward with more complacency than he had done before. It was a complacency, however, which arose entirely out of her intimacy with Rose; and when, during the last few days of her residence in the country, those precious days in which she lingered over each familiar object as if regarding it for the last time, if ever he joined her in her walks, or was in any way brought into contact with her, his conversation invariably turned upon her friend, or upon the minister's family, in some way or other.

At last the eventful morning came on which Ruth Clement was to take leave of her native home, and to consign herself to a new world of hopes, and fears, and trials, and interests, of which as yet she knew nothing. A neighbor of Mrs. Clement's who was going to town had offered to take charge of her daughter, and Austin Elliot accompanied her to the Middletons, to take leave of the friends, the loss of whose society occasioned her perhaps more real regret than any other consideration.

"And Rose, too," said Ruth to herself, "I think she will be sorry at last, though she has such excellent spirits; for I don't know who she will find to tell her secrets to, when I am gone."

Rose Middleton, however, appeared no more affected by the prospect of losing her friend, than she would have done had her mother's last new servant been about to go away. Not that she did not feel the value of so docile and faithful an associate in all her thoughts and all her occupations, but, from the cause already alluded to, her mind was pre-occupied by a more agreeable subject, and she was not sure that her face would look quite so pretty if she allowed herself to cry. One effort, however, she did make—the last which even pretended friendship

would withhold—she offered to accompany her friend to the coach, and her bonnet was soon put on, and a loose shawl thrown over her shoulders, and in a few minutes more she was walking with Ruth and Austin Elliot along the street toward the inn, asking a number of commonplace questions, without once waiting for a reply.

Arrived at the hotel whence the coach was to start, the party discovered that they should still have some minutes to wait, and on being shown into a little square parlor appropriated to the admission of persons so circumstanced, Rose declared her incapability to endure such an atmosphere as the tobacco smoke and the spirits of the night before had left there.

"It reminds me," said she, "that I want a bottle of lavender water; I will just step over to Mr. Jewin's, and be with you again in a moment."

It was impossible for Austin to allow so delicate a lady to go alone; and having first ascertained that all the boxes pertaining to Ruth were safe, he too set off for the lavender-water—perhaps the first time in his life that he had been engaged on such an errand.

"It would have been but a little while to have stayed with me," said Ruth to herself, as she stood looking out of the window, where the horses were to be seen already harnessed, "and if I, who have always been accustomed to such pure country air, could bear the atmosphere of this room, surely Rose might have done so too."

"Is this your luggage, miss?" asked the porter, throwing open the door as wide as it would go; and the kind old man, who had offered to take charge of Ruth to London, just then coming in, she was soon safely seated beside him on the outside of the coach, without any interference from other friends. As the vehicle, with all the rush and rattle which usually attend the commencement of a journey, rolled past the door of Mr. Jewin's shop, Rose expressed her astonishment and grief that such an accident should

have happened, as its actually starting before she had chosen her favorite scent, and running to the door, she waved in the air the white handkerchief, already perfumed with half the odors in Mr. Jewin's shop; while Austin, who was really grieved at his own neglect, stood back, and did not appear even to know that the coach was passing.

"It would have been better if they had never pretended to see me off," was the mental observation made by Ruth, who soon lost some portion of the poignancy of her grief in the sensations which her novel situation excited. Her companion, too, though a homely man, was extremely kind, and every little act of consideration shown to herself was received by Ruth with a degree of gratitude which actually made her happy for the time.

"Is this London?" she asked, with a simplicity which made the old man smile, whenever the houses began to thicken on each side of the road, and especially when villas and ornamental grounds seemed to realize, in some degree, the high ideas she had formed of that beauty and splendor which she had heard of as belonging to the great metropolis, and which she supposed to be the cause why her brother so unhesitatingly preferred a town residence to the farmhouse at Fearnfield.

"Now this *is* London," said the old man at last, when the road became narrower, the houses smaller, and more closely hemmed in with each other, and the population more dense and dirty; while old clothes were hung about the doors; and green grocers' shops, displaying old faded vegetables, were thrown open in the cellars below.

"This London!" exclaimed Ruth, "and does my brother Morris live here?"

"Not here, exactly," replied her companion, "but he breathes the same air, and walks past such places as these, every day."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Ruth again; "why, I don't think I can breathe here at all. The air is

like that of a room just swept, before the dust has settled; and the people look as if neither they nor their clothes had been washed for six months."

"If everybody and everything in London was washed to-night," observed the countryman, "it would look pretty much the same to-morrow.'"

"And does my brother Morris live here?" exclaimed Ruth again, less concerned about her own destination, than astonished at the choice of one whom she had always associated in her youthful fancy with what was most refined, and most elevated above the gross and vulgar requirements and occupations of human life. Nor was her wonder at all abated by the increase of noise, and bustle, and tumult, into which they entered, as the well-accustomed horses thridded their way, and drew the rattling vehicle along streets so densely filled, that from the bird's-eye view which the situation of Ruth commanded, to pass along them at all, seemed nothing less than a miracle.

"Is any one to meet you?" asked the old man, on their alighting from the coach.

"No," replied Ruth. "My mother thought you would be kind enough to see me into a coach, and tell the driver where to go. But I will settle with you first, if you please, for I think you have paid for me all the way."

"We'll see about that," said the countryman. "This hair trunk, you say, is yours—and this?"

"All these," said Ruth, and she stood beside them as directed, until her companion brought a coach from an adjoining street, into which he saw them safely stowed; after which he took the hand of Ruth, who looked at him inquiringly, as if to ask whether they were not to part there. He understood her look, and answering, "I don't lose sight of you until I see the door at No. 2;" he half lifted her into the carriage, and seated himself by her side.

"As to the matter of settlement," said he, going direct to the point which Ruth had most at heart,

"you need not mention that again, for it is not my practice to come to London empty-handed; and I know the circumstances of your mother, and yours too: so no nonsense about the money. I can afford it better than you can, anyhow; and you will find use enough in this great Babel for all you have got in your purse. I only wish it may be reason, and not folly, that calls it forth."

Ruth, of course, remonstrated; but it was all in vain. Her friend only repeated, he had daughters of his own, and good girls too; and he wished, if ever they were in need of it, that some old man, like himself, might pay their way as willingly as he did hers that day.

"Not to this great city, either," he added, "for it's a dangerous place, my dear, that you have chosen to set up in."

"Oh! do not call it choosing," said Ruth, for she felt, and felt bitterly, the repulsion of everything she saw. "I should never have thought of it, but—"

"Well, well, I know all about it," said the old man again. "Your mother told me everything; and for all she smoothed the matter over, by saying it was your choice—that you had a turn for millinery, and all that—I can not help thinking it was rather hard upon you to send you here."

"Whatever you think," exclaimed Ruth, "do not call it hard to me. I am trying every day, and every hour, not to think it so, and I have difficulty enough without any one making it worse."

"Yes; and you will have more difficulty still, if I mistake not," continued her companion, for he was no philosopher, nor acquainted with the nice art of accommodating the mind to circumstances, when circumstances can not be accommodated to the mind; thus the only means of consolation with which he was acquainted, besides that of his powerful help, was the expression of his no less powerful sympathy; and in giving utterance to that, he plunged into

every difficulty, and dived to the bottom of every trial, until the case he kindly intended to ameliorate, always became worse, instead of better, under his treatment.

"And now," said he, as the hackney-coach proceeded through street after street, all apparently interminable, "you behold the great whirlpool of human wickedness into which you have thrown yourself, or rather into which your friends have thrown you. Look at that man. Do you see those women? I need not tell you to beware of such. It is the seemingly respectable of whom you must learn to be afraid—the prettily-dressed poor girls—the young men who would take you out on Sundays, and treat you with their masters' money;"—and thus he went on, until Ruth began to fear she was entering a perfect den of iniquity, in which no one would be able to show her any good; and she at last ventured to ask in whom she was to trust.

"You have a bible, I dare say," said the old man. "You will read there of One whom you may trust, and trust with safety; and the oftener you refer to that blessed book, the happier and the better it will be for you.—But stop, my good fellow," he called out from the window, "don't you see that this is the place?"

The driver now pulled up his horses exactly opposite the front parlor window of Mrs. Prickett's house, where, instead of alighting, the countryman continued with his head thrust from the window of the coach, making every observation he could upon the outside of the habitation, which might lead to the most distant idea of the actual state of things within.

"The young women work in the cellar, I see," was the remark with which he drew back, and at that instant the door was opened by a bustling servant-maid, while the lady of the house herself, all ribands and smiles, stood in the entrance, to courtesy in, as she expected, a newly-arrived customer. It was with evident chagrin that she learned what

kind of arrival she had been so much on the alert to meet. And the servant-maid, too, grew tardy in her movements, as one package after another was handed to her by the coachman; and altogether there was as little appearance of welcome to poor Ruth as if she had been one of those packages herself.

"Good-by to you, child," said the old man, brushing the sleeve of his coat across his eyes. "I don't like all this; but I must not make a child of myself. It is no business of mine."

In another moment he was gone; and Ruth, wholly at a loss how to conduct herself so as to fit into her new situation, was conducted up stairs to a little room containing no other furniture than a bed and a few boxes, on the highest of which was placed a crazy looking-glass, which made one side of every unlucky countenance reflected in it appear longer than the other.

Poor Ruth! how she did loathe the aspect of everything around her! And then the tea that was brought out—no milk, for the family had had their tea, and the three drops of milk which remained over and above, had been given to the cat. How different was this tea to the plentiful table Ruth had often felt so proud and so happy to set out at Fearnfield! It was not for herself, however, that she cared for these things, and therefore this trial, as well as many others, was rendered endurable by the reflection thet her mother and Morris were not sharing it with her—that she had the pain of it all to herself, and that whatever she might suffer, she had the satisfaction of suffering for them.

And Ruth had need of this satisfaction, for there is perhaps no creature upon earth more pitiable than the dressmaker's apprentice in a great city, especially where they are far from their own friends, and are expected, as the frequent rule is, to turn out on Sundays, and to leave the best dinner, and the best room, for the enjoyment of their employers and their friends. There is a vulgarity, too, to which Ruth

Clement found herself but too sensitive in this kind of life in London, of which the dwellers in the country know nothing. Among the higher classes of society, the town residence, and the country seat, present very little difference of occupation, association, or interest; but in the lower, the case is widely different; and the very same grade whose leading characteristic is vulgarity in the one, is rusticity or homeliness in the other. It is even so with childhood. The very same boy who, in the outskirts of his native village, would satisfy the cravings of a youthful appetite with blackberries from the hedgerow in the green lanes, would stand in the crowded streets of London, watching the ladies and gentlemen eat buns and bon-bons, through the window of a confectioner's shop; and the little girl who, in her father's orchard would prick daisies upon a sprig of hawthorn to make a mimic tree in full blossom, would place the cast-off flowers of her mother's mistress in her own bonnet, and strut the juvenile coquette along the streets of London. The case reigns parallel throughout. He who descants upon the state of the times, seated in a "fancy tin arbor," inhaling the smoke of London, talks about the size of his quartern loaf, and the price of his pint of beer; while the man of the same grade discussing these subjects in the country, stretches his eye over the rich meadows and the wide fields of waving corn which bound his horizon, and, glorying in the aspect of the country which he calls his own, declares that he must have a daring mind, indeed, who would presume to trample on the rights, or restrain the liberties of a people so privileged, so fearless, and so noble, as those who bear the honored name of Englishmen.

Ruth Clement, though possessing all the simplicity of a country girl, and in her own character humble in the extreme, was perfectly alive to this peculiar change in her circumstances; and much as she felt the loss of all she had ever loved, she felt perhaps

more keenly the humiliation of being so entirely associated with a class of persons whose minds and feelings were as far below the general tone of hers, as the outward aspect of the peasant's life is below that of the sovereign on his throne. Still there was one source of consolation left for Ruth, of which she was not slow to avail herself; for she was not a person to sink under a trouble of mere feeling, when the comfort of acting, and acting generously, was left to her; and on the first moment of liberty being granted her, she hastened to her brother's lodgings, determined to relieve some of those pressing necessities about which she had heard him speak so often and so earnestly to her mother, by placing in his hands the money, which, but for the kindness of her companion from the country, would have been expended in her journey to London. She was anxious, too, to see again that familiar face which had filled her youthful fancy with the highest ideas she had ever formed of manly beauty. She was anxious to hear the sound of a voice associated with all her dearest household recollections; she was anxious to speak even the pleasant names of long-known and beloved things—though never loved so fondly as now, when a barrier of such entire separation seemed to be built up between her and them, that she must be content to speak in a new language in order to be understood.

"But Morris will understand me," she said many times to herself, as she thridded her new, and, to her, difficult way along the streets of London. "Perhaps he may have heard from my mother, and then I shall hear all about *them*;" for Ruth had accustomed herself to that homely expression, which includes all familiar domestic and household associations under this simple word. Thus if *they* were well and happy, it was enough for her; or, if she herself was fortunate enough to give satisfaction to *them*, it was the highest point of her earthly ambition; and yet if she had been asked to sum up the various items included

by her mental calculations in this comprehensive monosyllable, it is possible she would not have ceased without enumerating all the dumb animals, and many of the plants, which had been alike the objects of her affection, and the subjects of her care.

Arrived at her brother's lodgings, Ruth Clement was a little surprised to find them in a handsome, and what she supposed must be a very expensive street. The door, too, was one of which she scarcely dared to lift the knocker, from a nervous apprehension of who or what her summons might bring. A little boy who filled the office of porter, and whose appearance she thought would have been much improved by a good wholesome wash, relieved her mind from all further apprehension, by answering that Mr. Clement was at home, and by walking before her up a lofty flight of stairs, and opening the door of a handsomely furnished sitting-room, where a young gentleman in an elegant morning dress was reading the paper, while a late breakfast stood untasted beside him. Ruth thought at first that it could not really be her brother, because, though she had sent in her name, he gave no sign of recognition, until the boy had again retreated, and closed the door. Morris then knit his brows, and, looking very angrily at his sister, said—"What upon earth has brought you here?"

"I came," replied Ruth, not unaccustomed to this mode of treatment, and therefore not so easily repelled by it as some others might have been—"I came to bring you a little money which I have to spare."

Morris laughed a short laugh, as people do who are not altogether displeased. and who yet feel an utter contempt for the smallness and inadequacy of the means of satisfaction afforded or proposed.

"Your money is all very well," said he, "as far as it goes; but you must not be coming here at any time when it suits you—that will never do."

"Why not?" asked Ruth, with her accustomed simplicity.

"In the first place," replied her brother, "I must not have it known that you are my sister; and in the next, I have no wish that you should be exposed to the remarks which would naturally fall upon a young woman in your situation going in and out of a boarding-house for young gentlemen."

"In my situation?" asked Ruth, wholly at a loss to understand what peculiar considerations that situation involved.

"Yes, in your situation as a dressmaker's apprentice," was the unhesitating reply.

The tone and manner with which these words were spoken unravelled the whole secret to the comprehension of Ruth. She not only understood, but felt it all; and falling back to a wider distance from her brother, she cast a suspicious glance around the room, as if to ascertain that their interview was without a witness.

"I know what you mean, now," said she, looking a little paler than before; "I perfectly understand that I have fallen into a lower grade, and that you would be ashamed to have it known that I was your sister."

Ruth Clement could command her feelings no longer. In that great world of strangers to which she had consigned herself, where all had been so repulsive, so desolate, and so uncompanionable to her, her brother had been her all; and the hope of seeing him, though but for a transient interview now and then, had appeared like a gleam of sunshine through an atmosphere of clouds, in the prospect which her miserable life in London presented to her view.

"I would not come often," said she, weeping bitterly; "I would not come when you had company, nor call you my brother at all."

"Nonsense!" said Morris, as much vexed with the reasonableness of her sorrow, as with the sorrow it-

self. "Don't speak so loud; that boy knows everybody's business but his own."

"But you can not mean it," said Ruth, for hers was the effort of despair; "you can not mean that I am to live always with those people, and work from morning till night in that dark room of theirs, and never see you—never."

"I do mean it, though," said her brother, "for it would never do to have you here, and behaving in this way."

"Oh Morris!" exclaimed Ruth, with her hands clasped together, "I have so loved you!"

Morris opened the newspaper, and began a fresh page; but though the debates in Parliament at that time ran high, he glanced over the columns without knowing who had spoken, or to what effect. And there stood that mute girl, with her eyes riveted upon his countenance; for she believed herself to be gazing on his beauty for the last time; and while perfectly convinced in her own mind of what was to be her doom, she waited, like a criminal at the bar, for the passing of her final sentence.

Quicker a thousand times than any language can describe, strange thoughts, and stranger feelings, were passing through the mind of the man who could thus drive from him the only being who really loved him, in that great theatre of action in which he found his only enjoyment. There was something desolate in the sensation with which this act was accompanied, even to him, and he was unnerved and unhappy in every way. Unfitted in his own character to bear either disappointment or defeat, he had lately had to struggle against both, and every night, but especially the night preceding his interview with his sister, found him lost to every recollection that could either give him pain or pleasure. The consequence was, that every morning he was overcome with increasing weakness and irritability; and while, on the one hand, he struggled with impatience against ev-

ery encroachment upon his own time, or opposition to his own will, on the other, he was sometimes startled into a sudden susceptibility of feeling, from causes which his prouder nature would have regarded as altogether unworthy of a moment's consideration. Thus he would gladly have dismissed his sister without another word, but strove in vain for nerve to do so; for, in connexion with the humble pleading tones of her familiar voice, came back such recollections of their infancy, such glimpses of what hope then promised him, and such a cold dark picture of what experience had actually realized, that even his heart was melted, and turning toward his sister, he gave her one kind look, which brought her in an instant, with all her tears and all her tenderness, within his arms.

"You must not take it hardly, Ruth," said he, "if I still persist in what I have said. It is the necessity of circumstances, not of inclination."

"Oh think not of it!" exclaimed Ruth. "I was selfish and unreasonable to say what I did. I perfectly understand and agree to what you propose. I will neither trouble you, nor think hardly of you, for telling me to keep away."

"Thank you a thousand times," said Morris, who still kept his arm round his sister's waist; and so precious to her was that embrace, that she kissed his high forehead, and pressed her cheek upon his head, as if she had indeed been about to part with him for ever."

"Dear Morris," she said, in a timid voice, but clasping her arms more closely round his neck, "there is just one thing I want to say to you before I go."

"Well, child, what is it?"

"Do you ever read your Bible now?"

"Not very often."

"Do you ever pray?"

"Never."

"And don't you think it is a fearful thing in this great city to live among so much wickedness, and so

much temptation, without ever asking our heavenly Father to keep you safe ?"

"It is; but I feel more afraid to pray, than I am to live without it."

"Perhaps you have some darling sin you do not wish to give up, and therefore you can not ask a blessing on what you wish, or what you do."

"I am afraid I am all sin, and folly, and wretchedness."

"Are you really unhappy, Morris ?" said his sister, and with her hands clasped together, and pressed gently upon his head, she lifted up her eyes and her voice, and poured forth such a prayer as well might have awakened a response from a heart more hardened than his own. After this her spirit appeared more calm, more subdued to the trials of her lot, and, pressing upon his brow a farewell kiss, as gently as if it had been upon the cheek of a sleeping infant, she passed almost silently away from his apartment, and traced back her melancholy steps along the public street.

CHAPTER V.

Of all the days in the week which Ruth Clement had looked forward to, as holding out the most precious promise of intercourse with her brother, the sabbath was that upon which she most fondly calculated. It was also that in which she felt most in need of friendly companionship, for on that day of the week alone, she was not only allowed, but expected, to absent herself from the family in whose social hours she was a welcome participator, only so long as she contributed by her industry to make those hours more easy and comfortable to the present proprietors of her time and talents.

On the sabbath-day, then, Ruth generally made as long a journey as she could to some place of worship, distant from the city, in order to use up her spare time, and also to walk off a little of the weariness which her sedentary occupations occasioned. It was, however, a lonely sort of heartless task, to pass unattended along so many streets, among so many strangers unconcerned in all which belonged to her, and acquainted with her very existence, except as an atom of the moving mass before them.

It was many weeks after the interview described between Ruth and her brother, when she sallied forth one morning to spend this kind of solitary day, though she had been on this occasion invited to dine with a friendly woman, whose grade in society was just such as to render her not above showing hospitality to a dressmaker's apprentice. Though a good woman, Ruth had few thoughts in common with her; and though kind to one whom she looked upon as a poor friendless young woman, Ruth felt no great alacrity

in joining her family circle. She, therefore, loitered on her way, and stopping upon one of the bridges, amused herself with watching a party of pleasure set sail in a gayly-painted boat, while she repeated almost audibly the following stanzas of a beautiful Scotch ballad—

"There's nae place like our ain hame;
Oh! I wish that I was there!—
There's nae hame like our ain hame,
To be met wi' onywhere!—
And oh! that I were back again,
To our farm and fields so green;
And heard the tongues o' my ain folk,
And was what I hae been!"

The whole of these verses, though describing the situation of an imaginary character, possessed an extraordinary charm to the mind of Ruth; for there is a mysterious consolation in thinking that other individuals have even pictured to themselves the sorrows from which we are suffering; and as Ruth bent over the parapet of the bridge, to hide her face from the passers-by, her tears fell thick and fast into the heedless stream which hurried on its way below.

The sound of music from the pleasure-boat, which had at first attracted her attention, now disturbed the revery of Ruth; and, awakened to the necessity of passing on, she still turned her head toward the merry party, willing to have it supposed by any who might have observed her loitering and strange attitude, that she was only amusing herself with the amusement of others. The look, which had, at first, been one of pretended interest, became, however, as real as it seemed; for the eye of Ruth, ever quick and true to early impressions, suddenly caught the tall figure of her brother in the boat, while she could discover from his countenance that he was laughing, and looking as happy as the rest.

"Poor Morris!" said Ruth, more sorry for her brother's present mirth, than she had been for his sadness on the preceding day; "poor Morris! is

this, then, the way in which you can laugh off all your anxiety, and all your compunction ?"

Ruth thought, too, if her brother's debts were so very pressing, it was a pity he should be spending his money on amusements of this kind; but the hour, which then struck from the surrounding churches, reminded her that she had lingered already too long; and she endeavored, through the remainder of the day, to atone for her momentary neglect, by concentrating her thoughts in a more than usual manner, and fixing them upon the solemn services of the sabbath.

It was at rather a late hour that evening when Ruth Clement retraced her steps to the city; nor had she thought so much of her brother's present situation, as of his character and conduct in general; when, on reaching the bridge again, whence she had seen the gay party setting out on their excursion, the whole scene rushed back upon her mind, and she involuntarily stopped, if not actually to see, to think and conjecture what might be the circumstances attending his return. Ruth had scarcely paused, however, before the gathering of a crowd of men and boys along the side of the river attracted her attention; and, far in the distance, she discovered two boats, evidently vying with each other in the speed with which they cut through the water.

It requires very little to call together a crowd in London—very little to awaken, anywhere, in the minds of the idle and the thoughtless, that vulgar emulation which aims at pre-eminence in folly or vice; and thus the throng of spectators increased, and the two boats came nearer and nearer, until the dash of their oars would have been heard by Ruth, but for the roll of carriages immediately beside her, and the general hum of the great multitude, of which she formed an undistinguished item.

At last, a shout was heard, and there was a splash —a struggle—while the nearest boat rocked on one side, and the rowers stooped over; and then, while

they ceased from their labors, they seemed to be looking after something that was left behind. Another shout succeeded to the first, and both the boats put back, and rested on their oars, while some of the men could be seen making up a coil of ropes, and standing, as if in readiness to throw it to any spot that might be indicated by others.

Ruth did not at first feel any apprehension about what had happened. She thought it might have been a hat, a coat, or even a dog, which had fallen overboard; but, suddenly, she seemed to be impelled by a kind of irresistible necessity to hasten to the spot; and, with a countenance of such deadly paleness, that those who looked into her face, drew back astonished, and made way for her to pass, she thridded her way along the river-side, not once looking to the right hand, or the left, but keeping her eye fixed steadily upon one particular point, she succeeded in forcing a passage through the thickest of the crowd, and in standing directly opposite to where one of the boats was about to approach the land. Nor was it difficult for Ruth to discover, by the exclamations of the crowd, the frightful catastrophe which had occurred. "We could have saved him, too," said many voices at once, "but"—and Ruth knew perfectly well, without any of their coarse unfeeling descriptions, what was the reason why the sufferer could not by any possibility be saved. She knew, for by this time the lifeless form of her brother had been lifted out of the boat; and while many crowded round to see the tall and manly youth who had met with this untimely fate, Ruth was the only one who claimed, or who wished to claim, kindred or association with the deceased.

"Take him," said Ruth, in a tone and attitude of command unusual to her; when, suddenly recollecting that she had neither home nor shelter in that vast city, nor means of procuring either, she wrung her hands with an exclamation of wildness and distraction, which made the police press near to her,

and question her about her residence, and her name. Thus, though prepared in some measure for her great calamity, Ruth was entirely overcome by the lesser. Besides which, her mighty grief was sacred in itself. It was also one in which that gazing crowd had nothing in common; and, therefore, she had locked it in her heart, scarcely conscious of its real magnitude, and waiting only for the time when she might be alone, to ascertain its full extent; but the sudden sense of poverty and loneliness which came upon her, with the conviction that she had not where to bury her dead, was what she was wholly unprepared for; and such was her distress, and such her inability to devise any means to relieve her melancholy dilemma, that suspicions ran among the crowd of her not being quite herself; and strange stories were soon set afloat about her connexion with the young man who had been drowned.

All these, however, even had they reached the ear of Ruth, would have affected her but little, so deeply was her attention absorbed in the means which public benevolence employed for the restoration of her brother's life; but in vain she laid her hand upon the senseless breast—upon the brow, the temples, and the cheek. In vain she bent over that once beautiful countenance, and tried to persuade herself that some movement was in the muscles of the face, and that a warmth, like that of life, still lingered about the heart. The truth was too evident to admit of a doubt in any mind but hers, that the high and buoyant spirit which once animated that manly form, had left its earthly tenement for ever.

There are certain individuals with whom we habitually connect ideas of sickness, and decay, and death. If the wind blows coldly, we single them out as objects of especial anxiety; and after we have been separated from them for a while, we scarcely dare inquire of their relatives about their health, lest they should be dead. But, on the other hand, there

are those whom we are equally disposed to exempt from all suspicion of bodily danger. We see that they may, and do, run a thousand risks with regard to prudence, economy, and general esteem, but of their health we never think; and their death, though, in the course of nature, it must come at last, appears to be an event so far beyond the date of our own, that it scarcely occupies a place in our calculations. Of this class of beings had been Morris Clement; and even those who loved him best, had seldom had to struggle with a single fear relating to his precious life.

"He was so full of health, so blooming, so beautiful!" said Ruth to herself one day, as she was hastening on one of those long walks, in connexion with her occupation, which, in this instance, she had been permitted to take, in order that the change of air from the centre to the suburbs of London might do her good, and beguile her of some portion of that sorrow which the lady to whose employment she had bound herself, often told her, was well enough for a day or two, but that there was no reason in crying for a week. "Grief," this sage comforter would often say, "is of no use. It can not bring back the dead; and besides," what was of paramount importance to *her*, "it injures the sight." She had had two or three young women, she told Ruth, who had quite spoiled their eyes by fretting, so that they were of no use to her at all; and, no matter where they set up, would never succeed in their profession.

And yet Ruth used to be perpetually saying to herself, "He was so beautiful!" And when she traced the peopled ways of the great city, she looked from face to face with a sick heart, and almost wondered why death had not rather seized upon some of the worn and weary travellers along the same track with her, and spared the treasure of her soul.

With her spirits oppressed by such thoughts as these, which, if they did not actually rise in rebellion against the will of Heaven, were bordering upon a dangerous questioning of the wisdom of its de-

crees, Ruth Clement arrived at last at the door, which had been described to her as opening through a high wall, extending between the public road and the residence and grounds of the family in whose employment she was then engaged.

"Is Miss Clifton at home?" she asked of the servant who came to the door, and she was soon after ushered into a dressing-room adjoining the young lady's sleeping apartment, where she waited for her appearance with great patience, thinking of her brother all the while; perhaps the more intently, because the beauty of the place had struck her very forcibly, and because she had always been in the habit of associating him with everything elegant and superior, and such as she thought him peculiarly calculated to enjoy.

Miss Clifton was long in appearing, and when she did so, it was with a countenance so pallid, and a step so feeble, that Ruth drew back, afraid lest she was trespassing upon the privacy of an invalid.

"I shall be able to talk to you presently," said Alice Clifton, seating herself, and breathing very laboriously, "only the effort of dressing is a little too much for me; but I shall soon be better, if you have patience to wait."

"Oh! don't mind me," said Ruth. "Is there anything I can get you?—anything I can do for you?"

"I want you," said Alice Clifton, "to fit me out for a long journey;" and she smiled in a solemn and peculiar manner, as if there was another journey which she was contemplating besides that of which she spoke.

"A journey!" exclaimed Ruth; for the thing seemed impossible.

"Yes; it is to please my poor father that I make the attempt; and you know one is no further from heaven in another country than in this."

"But you have kind friends to go with you?" asked Ruth, in a tone of sympathy as unexpected as it was unusual, from one in her situation.

"There is my trial," said the lady; and now she looked really sad. "I have no mother, no aunt—nor friend, to take the place of either; and it is a heartless work going from home, to take care of one's self, especially without the least hope that the effort will produce the desired effect."

Ruth Clement was about to give further expression to the interest she really felt in the subject of these remarks, when, suddenly recollecting her situation, she checked herself before the words had passed her lips. There was, however, an expression in her countenance which none could have mistaken, and especially a child of nature like Alice Clifton, who valued real feeling, and the refinement and simplicity of an unsophisticated heart, far above the distinctions of rank or riches. She was alone, too, and ill, and a woman; and that natural yearning which her sex must ever feel, to lean, in the hour of weakness, upon the comfort and imagined support of human sympathy, rendered her peculiarly alive to those tones of tenderness in the voice of Ruth, which had often made her welcome to the sorrowful, without their being aware of any particular reason why she should be so.

"You have, at least, a faithful and kind attendant?" said Ruth, with great diffidence and hesitation.

"There, again, I am in a difficulty," replied Miss Clifton. "Indeed, I am in difficulty every way. The only person to whom I could look in this capacity has been long my father's devoted nurse, and he needs her care and experience so much more than I do, that I would not for the world deprive him of her services. But, come, we must begin our business, for I want a general outfit; and see, I have grown so slender, I shall want all my things remaking."

Ruth Clement now began her operations, and made herself very busy, with measuring, shaping, and contriving; but, almost unconsciously to her-

self, there had been a chord of feeling touched in her heart, which awakened so many thoughts and recollections, that her tears fell fast upon her work, and, in spite of all her efforts to conceal them, they were discovered by the quick eye of Alice Clifton.

"I am afraid," said she at last, "you are in trouble. Your dress indicates that you have had a recent loss. Perhaps the remedies prescribed were too late in the case of your relative, as well as in mine."

Ruth Clement now almost sobbed aloud. Ashamed though she was, to be so obtrusive in her grief, she felt what many have felt besides herself, that it is more difficult to resist an expression of unexpected kindness, than to bear the bitterest reproach, or the coldest neglect. Her sorrowful story was soon told, and told with all the simplicity of real and recent grief.

"What was your brother's name?" asked Alice. "I think I saw something of this accident in the papers."

"Morris Clement," replied Ruth.

"Clement—Clement?" said Alice. "I remember that name. Oh, it was a friend of my brother's—a young man who was employed in the same office."

"I dare say it might be the same," observed Ruth. "My brother was in an office in London."

"Oh, no!" replied Alice, "the young man whom I mean, was a person of considerable expectations" —a gentleman, she was going to say, but suddenly recollecting what this would imply, in connexion with the individual before her, she checked herself, and went on to make further inquiries into the melancholy case.

To find a willing and patient listener to the praises her fond heart was perpetually bestowing upon her brother, afforded poor Ruth perhaps the only happiness she had left in this world; and now that death had sealed his merits with its unchanging stamp—now that no act of his future life could gainsay her

high encomiums, she felt a sad satisfaction in telling of his brilliant talents, his liveliness, his wit, his beauty—

"And his religion?" asked Alice Clifton, rather abruptly.

Ruth bent down her head, and blushed, for her feeling was that of deep and bitter shame; and knowing, as she did, that in the one thing needful her brother was so lamentably deficient, she had cause for blushing and confusion of face, that she could have attached so much merit to the mere embellishments of a worldly and selfish character.

Alice Clifton, feeling that she had touched upon a painful subject, said no more, except to inquire into the situation and prospects of Ruth, for the idea had struck her, that as she was, in all probability, a young person in necessitous circumstances, she might be willing, should her habits and character be found suitable, to become the companion of her intended journey. She therefore asked many particulars relating to her home-connexions, and especially inquired for references to any respectable friends, of whom the necessary inquiries could be made.

Mr. Middleton, of ———, was the person in whose recommendation Ruth placed the greatest confidence, and she gladly went on, naming all those familiar places and persons whose connexion with her own simple history gave her a feeling of honest pride, especially when compared with what she could derive from her London associations.

"Clement, Fearnfield, and the Middletons!" said Alice Clifton. "I am sure I have heard these names before. Your brother could not be the young man who was thought so clever in the office of Messrs. Bakewell?"

"He was the very same," replied Ruth.

"And he is dead!" exclaimed Alice, with a look almost of horror—"dead so suddenly—and in so awful a manner! and I, who knew him well, spent many an idle hour in his company, merely chatting

over the trifles of the moment, and never once, that I can recollect, attempted to lead his mind to any serious consideration of the solemn realities of this life, in connexion with the next. Oh, what a thought is this, when we ourselves are approaching the confines of eternity, and when time is mercifully granted to us to prepare—that we have trifled away the precious moments of our past lives, and perhaps condemned the light and thoughtless beings with whom we associated, as less worthy than ourselves, while we never so much as lifted a finger to point them to a better and a safer path.

"Of your brother's sins, whatever they might be," continued Alice, rising and advancing toward Ruth, "I can not feel myself wholly guiltless. Tell me," said she, holding out her hand with all the familiarity of friendship, "tell me whether there is anything in which I can be serviceable to you; for I feel as if I had but little time remaining on this side the grave, and I would fain turn that little to some account."

"I scarcely know," replied Ruth, "in what your kindness could be available to me."

"And I am quite aware," observed Alice, "that it is scarcely delicate to speak directly of my wish to assist you, in the way I have done; but, as I said before, time presses. Can I, then, be of any service in placing you in a situation more congenial to your feelings?"

Ruth blushed deeply, and, smiling through her tears, looked like one who suddenly beholds a prospect too blessed to be realized.

"Speak plainly, and without fear," said Alice; "you have a plain-dealing person to do with."

"Then if you would permit me to be the companion of your journey," said Ruth, with a trembling consciousness of her own unworthiness of such a trust, "it would make me as happy as anything in this world could make me, now."

This proposal, agreeable as it appeared to both

parties, owing to their peculiar circumstances, was soon agreed upon; and though Mr. Clifton argued, not without reason, that a much more experienced person ought to be engaged as companion to his daughter, such was the impression made upon her mind by the simplicity and genuine feeling of Ruth, that with the pertinacity of an invalid, though shown in a more than usually good-natured manner, she succeeded at length in obtaining her father's consent to her plan; and, as the season was far advanced, Ruth was requested to hasten the preparations for their journey, among which a farewell visit to Fearnfield was of necessity included.

To this visit Ruth naturally looked with a degree of painful apprehension, knowing of how very little importance she herself was to her mother's happiness, in comparison with him who was gone; and she dreaded to behold the void his death had left, without being able, in any degree, to supply his place.

The welcome she received from her mother, however, did much to create an impression, confirmed by subsequent conversations, that her mother was an altered woman since they had last met. By the removal of her earthly idol, a mist appeared to have been cleared away from her mental vision, while her spiritual discernment was at the same time rendered more clear; and nothing could have afforded a more affecting proof that the stroke had not been sent in vain, than the patience and humility with which she submitted to her irreparable loss. Thus, though Ruth Clement had believed at one time that nothing in this world ever could look cheering or attractive to her again, there arose out of the contemplation of her mother's altered character such a constant source of satisfaction that she sometimes found herself silently rejoicing in a manner which made her almost check the feeling, as if it had been a violation of the sacred sorrow she still felt for her brother's untimely death.

There were stirring scenes, too, about to transpire among her old friends and associates, and Ruth had ever a heart ready to sympathize with those she loved, both in their joy and their sorrow. Among these events, the most important was, that Rose Middleton was about to be married to Austin Elliot.

"You will be very much surprised, no doubt," said Rose, on first mentioning the subject to her friend. "Indeed, I am surprised myself, he is so very different from—from—your brother Morris. But no matter: I always thought there was a fate in it, from the day we first met. It was so strange, that I should awake to consciousness from that frightful shock, and see him, of all persons, watching over me."

"There could be no fate in it," observed Ruth, "but what you chose to impose upon yourself; and as for the strangeness of your first interview, I suppose if one of my mother's laborers had happened to find you senseless on the road, you would not have felt bound to marry him."

"How very disagreeable you can be," said Rose. "But see here!" and she drew forth some of her wedding dresses, which, from their elegance and variety, Ruth could not help thinking would but ill accord with the character and habits of Austin Elliot. He was, however, still a stranger to her—a man of unfathomed and unknown feelings, with whom she felt that it would be possible for her to live for years without approaching nearer to intimacy or freedom of conversation. To her, there had always appeared something austere and stern in his look and manners; though when he did smile, which was very seldom, a kind and cordial expression diffused itself over his countenance. He was most rigid, too, in the observance of his religious duties, though, from the fact of his having chosen Rose Middleton as the companion of his future life, there was strong cause for suspicion, that a certain degree of laxity, on some points, might, with great justice, be laid to his

charge. At all events, he was guiltless of everything bordering upon hypocrisy, for, while backward and reserved in conversing on religious subjects, his deep feelings, and strong scruples were less discoverable in the remarks he made upon others, than in the strictness of life, and self-denial, which he imposed upon himself.

"He is a strange anomaly," said Ruth, when she saw him one day laying aside his natural dignity of character, and endeavoring to accommodate himself to the playful caprices of Rose. Ruth was not acquainted with the important fact, that the wisest of men have their weak points; and that the more they fortify themselves against folly in things in general, the more blindly and pertinaciously they follow out those absurdities, of which, from the strong mastery of inclination, they do allow themselves to be guilty. It is as if, perfectly conscious they will lose credit with the world for what they are doing, they determine to turn that loss to account, by giving themselves wholly up to the satisfaction for which it has been incurred.

Had Austin Elliot been a man of less feeling, he might not only have escaped the folly of choosing an unsuitable wife, but he might have been a more consistent character in every respect. But there is a wide difference between a man of no feeling, and a man who hides his feelings from the world. The latter will ever be a paradox—a mystery to himself and others; but he will at the same time, be capable of inspiring both interest and affection, which the other will not.

Ruth Clement could not help fancying, sometimes, that Austin Elliot, deeply as he had fallen into that state which is called being in love, had secret suspicions that his affections were not wisely placed. She thought, too, that he sometimes looked at her, as if on the point of speaking more confidentially than he had ever yet done; and that he sought her society, though, from the silent walks they took together, it

would have been difficult to assign a reason for his doing so.

It happened, however, that they were left alone together for the whole of one rainy evening, in the old parlor at Fearnfield. "Ruth Clement," said he, at last, after clearing his voice many times, and it was the first time he had addressed Ruth by her name, "It is a very important step," he continued, "which I am about to take."

"It is so," said Ruth, endeavoring to encourage him by her sympathy; "yet it is one upon which many venture without having occasion to repent of it."

"But, if they do repent?" said he; and he spoke with a voice at once so deep, and so full of emotion, that Ruth looked up involuntarily, to see whether he was the same individual with whom she had been conversing on indifferent subjects a moment before.

Startled as she was at the expression of his countenance, as well as at the tones of his voice, Ruth still endeavored to sooth him by common-place observations; for, in fact, she knew not what else to say.

"Rose Middleton is young; I am afraid she is thoughtless," said Austin.

"Yet she has been religiously brought up," observed Ruth.

"There is my confidence," said her companion. "From the order and regularity of her father's house, she will be in some measure prepared for mine."

"But her father allows of many indulgences," observed Ruth, "to which you are unaccustomed."

"True; and I must not have the rules of my household in any way interfered with. I may be mistaken in my views; but so far as I see them to be right, I am determined they shall be carried out."

"Poor Rose!" said Ruth, involuntarily.

"Why poor?" asked the man, very naturally, who thought he was about to make her rich.

"She is but a child in experience," said Ruth.

"She has a kind mother. She has never been subjected to much discipline of any kind, least of all to self-discipline. You may break her light spirit, but I fear there must be some concession on your part, before you can bend it to your will. May I ask if she clearly understands your views, and is made fully acquainted with your habits?"

"She is."

"And she concurs in all your plans?"

"Oh, yes, with the most amiable compliance."

The fact was, poor Rose was generally thinking of something else, either of her dresses, or of the time of her marriage, or of some trifle connected with the important change she was about to make, when these plans were the subject of conversation between her and her lover; and if she ever gave them a moment's consideration, it was to be dismissed on the instant, with the comfortable conviction, that once installed in her new situation as mistress of Fearnfield, one half of her amusement would consist in bending the grave man who was the present master there, to her more sovereign will. Thus, she felt no apprehension whatever about the strict rules of his house; for, even with regard to her continuing to take those customary stimulants which her mother and her friends considered so essential to her health, she firmly believed there would be no difficulty, as it was impossible for her to conceive how a man, who really loved her, should object to her having the common enjoyments—nay, even the necessaries of life.

It was, therefore, by passing the subject thus lightly over, that the two parties were supposed to be accommodated to each other, rather than by a clear and full explanation of its nature and requirements, and thus an actual agreement of opinion; or by an entire concession on one side to the superior judgment of the other. It might be impertinent to ask, how many married persons have discovered, on awaking from a dream like this, that a clearer ex-

planation, and a more serious investigation of the truth, before the irrevocable knot was tied, might have saved them from a union which ever afterward produced as little sympathy as satisfaction. Still, in the case of Rose Middleton, as in many others, the preparations went on, and the eventful time drew near, without either party discovering that they had scarcely a thought or a feeling in common with the other; for love in one instance, and vanity in the other, had been equally busy in blinding the eyes of both.

CHAPTER VI.

THE public career of Arthur Middleton had been more successful than could have been anticipated by the friends who were associated with his early years, and who knew the difficulties which his sensitiveness, and his habits of abstraction and reserve, continually presented in the way of his advancement in usefulness as an active member of the great human family. There seemed, however, as if, by a sudden outburst of natural and uncontrollable feeling, to have been a barrier broken down between him and society at large; and wherever the eloquent language of his heart had been poured forth in the public advocacy of a noble cause, an impression had been made in his favor, so strong, that he was immediately surrounded by friends; and from being an absolute stranger, he was accustomed to find himself suddenly translated into the bosom of hospitable, and sometimes of noble families, where, in the midst of a brilliant circle, his voice alone was listened to, while his wishes were consulted, and his plans were made the rule of action to all who moved within the sphere of his influence.

That all this celebrity and all this homage brought with it a heavy and constant tax upon his time, his energies, and even upon his bodily strength, was but too evident, from his pale and haggard cheek, the restless fire of his dark but sunken eyes, and the feverish anxiety of his whole countenance. It is the plague of intellectual distinction, that great expectations are always raised; and in no case is this more

painfully felt than in that of the popular speaker. The author, who writes in private, may fly from the public whom he has failed to please; but the multitude who flock to hear an eloquent speaker, must be delighted, or disappointed, then and there. And Arthur Middleton felt all this, not only too painfully for his peace of mind, but also for his health; and often it was, that, with feeble knees and throbbing temples, he ascended the steps of that elevated spot, whence he used to look down upon his audience, and ask himself, with fear and trembling, "How shall this multitude be fed?"

It is probable that, in the simplicity of his heart—for his was a character which still remained, in a great degree, unsophisticated—he would have continued to look for strength in his weakness to that source alone whence all real strength is derived, but that kind and experienced friends, who were careful and anxious for the preservation of his health, persuaded him that extraordinary efforts like his, demanded an extraordinary supply of stimulus, which they most urgently forced upon him in the form of refreshment and support; while, glad of anything which gave him nerve for the moment, he accepted freely and thankfully the offered draught, believing there was no other means of alleviating that craving of the body, and that sinking of the soul, to which he was becoming increasingly liable. He found, too, that the good men with whom he associated, were in the habit of keeping up their strength, as they supposed, by the same means. One assured him that he lost his voice, without the use of these means; another, that he could not sleep after much speaking, unless he had recourse to the same remedy; a third, that he was unable to get through three services in the day; and a fourth, that he had no other way of keeping off a painful spasmodic attack, to which he was peculiarly liable. It was, however, a curious fact, and still more curious that it escaped the notice of Arthur Middleton, that, of these four

men who freely used the medicine prescribed, the first, even with the use of such means, had scarcely any voice at all; the second was incapable of the sleep he sought by these means to procure; the third always suffered severely from three services a day; and the fourth had about as many spasms as his constitution could endure; so that one would have supposed they would each and all have been rather inclined to change their way of life, than to maintain that the system they pursued was the best that could possibly be adopted for them.

And so it is, almost universally, with those who advocate the use of artificial stimulants on the score of health. "Oh!" says the man who can scarcely speak for a violent fit of coughing, "my cough is so bad, if I abstain."—"Ah!" says another, "this system of starvation may do for you, but for one whose digestion is impaired like mine, there is no other way of keeping up the functions of the body;" while another assures you, that, but for the bilious headaches which shake her constitution, she should be able to live as you do.

But to return to our story. Arthur Middleton was one evening returning from a large public meeting, the throbbing of his head and heart rendered doubly violent by the cordials which had been administered to him, when a note was put into his hand, requesting him to visit an invalid lady, who was a stranger in that place; and stating she wished to see him in the capacity of a spiritual friend.

The small town at which he was then visiting, was on the southern coast of England; one of those often resorted to by the sick and the suffering, to whom the fatigues of a longer journey would be a risk too great to incur. He was, therefore, not surprised at the request, and hastened on the following morning to the place of appointment, perhaps with more alacrity, because the name had a secret charm to him, as connecting the present with the past, though the possibility of there being any family tie

between the parties, was what he scarcely dared to hope.

The residence of the invalid lady to which he had been directed, was situated on a gentle declivity, where a green hill, richly covered at the summit by trees of the most luxuriant vegetation, sloped gradually down toward the sea, not so distant but that the lulling sound of its constant waves could just be heard as they fell with regular motion upon the rocky shore. The cottage itself, for it was one of those small but elegant mansions to which no other name could be given, was completely embowered in a beautiful shrubbery, among which the red berries of the mountain-ash, and the crimson teints of the fading sumach, showed that the chilly breath of autumn, though softened in its influence, had breathed even here the sad tidings that winter and decay were close at hand. The monthly rose, however, still bloomed in all its beauty about the porch, and the trellis-work which screened the windows; and but for the symptoms already mentioned, of the "closing year's sad fall," you might easily have imagined that perpetual summer smiled in those delicious regions—so mild and genial was the atmosphere, so soft and verdant the aspect and coloring of nature all around.

Occupied by a train of reflections which had little to do with the scene upon which he gazed, Arthur Middleton entered the house, and was ushered into the sick room, without noticing the female attendant who met him at the door. He had even seated himself by the couch of the invalid, before the idea flashed across his mind, that he must have seen both the suffering lady and her companion before. The invalid, however, kept her handkerchief so closely pressed to her lips, that the upper part of the face alone was visible; and though her eyes were such as could not easily be mistaken, they had become so large and languid, as to retain but little of their former character.

"Miss Clifton," said a voice, which made him start, "is strictly interdicted by her medical attendant from speaking to any one; I must, therefore, be the interpreter of her wishes. But first allow me to speak for myself, and unravel the mystery in which I see you are entangled, by simply telling you that I am Ruth Clement, your old neighbor, at Fearnfield."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Arthur, yet holding out his hand, with the most cordial expression of friendly recognition. "You are, I see, my sister's friend. But how came you here? for I feel like one dreaming."

"Softly!" said Ruth, lifting up her finger in the attitude of caution; and Arthur, turning to the invalid, saw that a bright rose-colored teint had spread itself all over her cheeks and forehead. It was no time for thoughts or words on indifferent subjects; and, in compliance with a sign which the sufferer herself had made, the Bible, which lay upon the table, was opened, and a prayer was breathed by the side of her couch, which, if less eloquent than might have been expected from those lips, wanted not the impress of deep and fervent feeling.

This solemn service ended, Arthur felt that it would be most prudent, as well as most kind, for him to retire; but he could not leave the house without obtaining from Ruth a full and satisfactory explanation of the circumstances connected with his visit.

"Ruth!" said he, when her simple story was concluded, and at the same time laying his hand impressively upon her arm, as he spoke, "as you value your own life, you must cherish and protect that precious one committed to your charge. Perhaps you do not know its real value, as I do, who have seen her in her father's home."

"Oh! do not tell me that," said Ruth. "No one can admire this excellent young lady more than I

do—her resignation, her kindness, her unselfishness—"

"You must not let her die!" said Arthur, as a natural shudder crept over him. "What does her physician think of her case?"

Ruth shook her head, but answered not; and Arthur, suddenly snatching up his hat, went out, and walked for a long time alone upon the seashore, until, at a late hour, he recollected that he had a public service to attend to that day, and that a party of flattering and expectant friends would already be awaiting his arrival.

Oh, what a task it is, when the soul is racked with anxiety! what a labor of Hercules it is, to wear those sunny smiles, and that look of cheerful animation, which constitute our passport to society, and claim a never-failing welcome from our friends! It is not so much under the pressure of great calamities, as when called upon for continued personal effort, in a manner wholly at variance with the strong but secret current of the thoughts, that men, and women too, are in danger of making the stimulus of false and momentary excitement supply the place of real feeling. Would not that be a dark and fearful page of human history which should disclose the secret of half the animation, the pretended interest, the life, the flow of animal spirits, the whipping up, as it were, the bubbles of an empty mind, the playful antics of the goaded spirit—the glitter of the sunbeams on the ice—the dance of the captives in their chains—all, all, in short, which those who labor at the weary oar of perpetual agreeableness, for its own sake alone, are accustomed to practise and to suffer in society? It matters not to her who mixes in the brilliant circle, whether her heart be torn asunder by conflicting emotions—her brow must be smooth, her ear attentive, and her cheek arrayed in smiles. It matters not to him who stands forth to delight and animate the public mind, whether his own be laid waste by the tempest, or dry and barren as the leaf-

less desert; the eager eye of expectation is fixed upon him, his lot is portioned out, and he must play his part upon the stage with as much appearance of interest as if his heart, with all its lively energies, and all its warm affections, were engaged in the work he had to do.

One of the grand secrets of this peculiar kind of acting, we have already hinted, was not unknown to Arthur Middleton, and on this occasion it became more than ever his resource. Indeed, it had lately been so habitual that his natural reserve was almost entirely overcome; and from a popular speaker he became, by an easy transition, a general favorite in society. Still he was far, very far, from being guilty of what is called excess. He never took anything of the kind simply for his own gratification, or otherwise than, as he believed, to give him strength, and to do him good; nor was he ever known to be affected by this potent medicine in any way beyond an increased degree of cheerfulness and sociability. How could he, therefore, be guilty of excess?

Constant as Arthur Middleton was, in his daily inquiries after the health of Miss Clifton, it was not until after more than a week had elapsed that he was again admitted to her presence; nor would his visit even then have been deemed advisable, had not the announcement of his expectation of being called to a distant part of the country in the course of a few days increased the desire which the invalid frequently expressed, to see him once again. She was in some degree recovered, at least so far as to be permitted to converse for a short time at once, when they met for the second time; though her pallid and almost ghastly countenance, and the attenuated character of her blanched and feverish hands, afforded fearful evidence that scarcely less than a miracle could save her.

"I was going abroad," said she, in the course of her conversation with Arthur, "when the first rupture of a blood-vessel arrested my progress; and now

a second time I have been warned, that what I have yet to do on earth must be done quickly. This plea, and the injunction laid upon me not to speak much, must be my apology for the abruptness and freedom of what I am about to say to you. Think of me, if you can, as a dying sister," she added, with a smile of peculiar sweetness, and at the same time extending her hand to Arthur. "I have known but little of you, yet I have thought much; and a suspicion haunts me, that while laboring with right intentions in a good cause, you are not using such means as are likely to be owned and blessed of God."

"Speak plainly," said Arthur. "I beseech you to do so, for I am at a loss to comprehend your exact meaning."

"I will endeavor to speak plainly," replied Alice, "if you will promise me your patience and forgiveness."

"Oh! not my patience and forgiveness!" exclaimed Arthur; "but my gratitude, my joy, my blessings on your name."

"Then hear me," resumed Alice, "for I have no strength to waste. You must be aware it is on a sick bed alone that the eternal realities of life and death are brought, in all their vividness and all their truth, before us. Yet, on the confines of the grave, how often is the mind clouded by the weakness of the body. How does the fever that is raging in our veins quicken, as it were, the tide of thought, until we scarcely can distinguish one idea from another, and the whole becomes like a moving mass of evidence, ready to shift itself to whatever side the fancy of the moment may direct. Oh, what would we not give, at such times, to stop the wonderful machinery of excitement—to sweep the whole away, and to begin again, like a little child, to see things as they really are! But, the fever-fit goes off, and then, then comes the reaction—then palls the cherished thought upon the mind—then sinks the weary soul; and not even the contemplation of heaven, full as it is of

mercy, nor hosts of angels, with the glorified Redeemer at their head, have attraction, or power, or efficacy, to raise the mind above the suffering body, so as to make it at such seasons rejoice. These, then, are the trials of a sick couch; how far beyond the sufferings of the body, which are so generally commiserated; yet, painful as the latter state may be to bear, I think I should prefer it, with the greater degree of clear-sightedness by which it is accompanied, to that heated, hurried state of feeling, in which I can neither distinguish right from wrong, nor feel the preference I ought, even where I can see the distinction.

"Now tell me, you who are a minister of the gospel, you who are called to the advocacy of a great and noble cause, tell me, whether there are not times when your own mind is heated, and hurried, beyond its powers of perception; when the voice of conscience is only like one among a multitude of sounds; when the aspect of divine truth, bright though it be, is of uncertain character; when the shifting scenes of the present life, mix themselves up with what is pure, and fixed, and eternal; and, worse than all, when, even if the understanding perceives, the affections are so debased, that they fail to reject what is evil, and to cleave with inalienable attachment to what is good?

"Have you known anything of this state?" the speaker went on to ask, with a voice so solemn, that it seemed to be awakened from the grave.

"I have," replied Arthur meekly.

"I will not ask," she continued, "whether the fever of the soul, which you have felt, is self-imposed. I will not ask, whether it has its seasons of depression, of languor, of prostration, without the energy to ask for help; but, oh, if it be anything like mine, shake it from you while you have the power, and do not let one of the heaviest dispensations which a righteous judgment can inflict—that of a darkened conscience and a beclouded mind—oh, do not let this

calamity be self-imposed, lest it should seal your doom, and shut you out from mercy for ever!"

Scarcely had Alice Clifton uttered these words, when she sunk back on her pillow so completely exhausted, that Arthur felt it would not only be unkind, but useless, to urge any further explanation of a subject which still remained a mystery to him. "How could it be," he asked himself a thousand times, "that good men of every class and grade in society, not only allowed, but encouraged indulgence to a certain extent, in what he had never for one moment of his whole life suspected to be pernicious; and yet that the habit, innocent as he believed it to be, should so impress the mind of one standing as it were upon the borders of eternity—that a voice as if from the grave seemed to have been sent to warn him of a danger he had never until that moment been aware of? Either on one side or the other there must be a serious mistake—serious, indeed, if he and his advisers had hitherto been in the wrong."

Bewildered by the consideration of an inconsistency which had never before occupied his attention, Arthur Middleton entered into a strict examination of his own feelings, and habitual state of mind; the result of which was, a conviction that he did almost always labor under alternate fits either of excitement or depression; that his mental vision was far indeed from being clear; and that his spiritual life was uncertain as the flickering of a flame just brought into occasional existence by the stirring up of expiring embers. He recalled—and, alas! how much of his past experience had been of this nature!—seasons in which his mind had been so clouded, that he was compelled to do the utmost violence to his feelings of lassitude and depression, in order to wring out the least portion of intellectual energy; and yet, in the position he maintained, where every effort was a duty, and every duty an effort, how often had he forced himself on by the goading of renewed stimulus, and stood up before the multitude not knowing

what he should say; yet in that peculiar state, when, by the stunning of his senses, he had ceased to care. And it is precisely this ceasing to care, which constitutes the secret of the strength supposed to be derived from any artificial stimulants. The man who drinks the intoxicating draught to sooth his pain, is still the victim of the same disease, though he heed sit not; and he who drowns his mental suffering in the social bowl, bears still the burden of his misery, though for a moment he may cease to feel its weight. It is the same in a more moderate degree, even to the smallest fraction of that excitement which the intoxicating draught produces. Its first effect upon the mind, and that which many a good and worthy person has experienced, is a degree of ceasing to care; and it is this most especially which constitutes the Christian's temptation, and his bane. Why should he wish in any degree, even the very smallest, to cease to care? to cease to feel that the chastisements of a righteous Judge are upon him? Oh, better a thousand times —more welcome and more purifying to the soul—are the severest visitations of mental, or even of bodily suffering, than that deadening of the faculties of perception and judgment, with that extraordinary and disproportioned quickening of the powers of action, which are sure to be produced by a frequent repetition of the most popular means of restoring exhausted nature, and renovating enfeebled strength.

"I will make the experiment," said Arthur Middleton, suddenly starting from his seat one day, after he had been meditating for some time alone. "She may yet live, and if I have no other claim upon her favor, I may surely speak of this; for to her voice alone, her single voice against the many, I owe it that I make the trial."

Although important in principle, it had seemed to Arthur but a trifle in action to make the experiment upon which he was resolved; but none can ever know the power of habit, and of this habit in particular, until they determine upon laying it aside. To be mastered

by a mere bodily propensity, was the last and the lowest degradation of which Arthur Middleton could have believed himself capable; and yet, how was it? a want—an aching want was upon him in his hours of loneliness, in his seasons of exertion, when kind and social friends were around him, and when he stood a solitary stranger in the midst of an expecting crowd. He had chosen, too, to combat with his enemy at a time when he labored under peculiar disadvantages. The impression made upon his heart by the slight intercourse established between him and Alice Clifton in her father's house, had been deeper than he was willing to believe. In vain he had struggled against this impression, supposing, as he did, that he was entirely forgotten, or remembered only with indifference, by one who filled, not only all his vacant thoughst, but whose image forced itself upon him, to the exclusion of almost every other. What, then, must have been the effect upon his mind of their second and sad meeting, unexpected as it was to him, with the grave just opening by the side of that beloved and cherished one, for whose life he would willingly have offered up his own?

And yet, capable as Arthur was of feeling in their utmost acuteness, all these contending emotions, he was compelled to go forth into the world, when his chosen place would have been beside that couch of suffering, or even at the door of that silent cottage, guarding it from the intrusion of steps less gentle than his own. He was compelled to play an animated part in society; to enliven, to arouse, and to convince of truths of which his own heart had almost ceased to feel the force. It was, indeed, a season of peculiar temptation, yet, for some days, he had maintained his resolution unshaken.

Arthur Middleton had been under the necessity of removing to a very different scene of action from that which permitted him the melancholy satisfaction of visiting Alice Clifton; or, at least, of hearing every day, and almost every hour, of the varying state of

her health. He was now in the midst of a brilliant circle, the guest of a distinguished and noble lady, who had filled her house with visiters in compliment to the young orator, who, she, doubted not, would enjoy the conspicuous place she had thus enabled him to fill. Absent, restless, and impatient, Arthur was, however, far from being the sort of person upon whom she had expected to bestow the favor of her smiles. He saw her disappointment, and that of her guests; and he knew exactly what would give him the kind of stimulus he so much wanted, to raise his spirits to a level with their expectations. What could he do? The dulness of the first day was pardoned on the score of bodily fatigue after a long journey. He resolved to wait until the next, when a much-wished-for letter would arrive from Ruth, and, perhaps, decide his fate, so far as death might set its awful seal upon the future.

The following morning was appointed for a public meeting, the lady whose guest Arthur then was, being a liberal patron of the cause he was pledged to advocate; and again the speaker was excused on the score of anticipated duty. He was also permitted to spend much of his time, undisturbed, in an apartment appropriated to his use; and here he awaited the arrival of the messenger who had been sent for letters to the neighboring town. The servant was long in coming; time glided on; Arthur laid his watch upon the table, and paced to and fro in the room, thinking as little of the speech he was about to make, as of the transactions which might, at that moment, be taking place in another planet. The hour was now struck by the great clock in the court-yard of the noble mansion. Carriages had been rolling to and from the door for some time; loud voices of greeting and expectation were heard in the adjoining apartment. A gentle tap at the door, and a silvery voice, announced to him that the company were waiting. At that moment a servant brought the letters. There was one from Ruth, sealed with a black seal. Arthur struck his

brow with a violence which made the servant, who had not yet retired, look round.

"May we come in?" asked the lady of the house, and a rush, and a giggle, were heard among her friends, as some very young ladies peeped past her, to steal a glimpse of that enchanting man, who had delighted the whole school at which their minds had received such wide expansion.

"May we come in?" asked the lady of the house again, and Arthur was obliged to answer, "Yes;" for they had already forced an entrance, and the process of introduction had already begun, before he was capable of recollecting, had he been asked, so much as his own name.

"I am sure Mr. Middleton is not well to-day," whispered one of the guests.

"How jaded he looks!" observed another.

"We shall hear nothing worth coming for to-day," said a third; and the lady herself, taking very serious alarm lest the whole affair should prove a failure, pressed upon him every kind of cordial, stimulant, and revival, which her house could supply.

It was indeed a moment of temptation to Arthur, but still he kept his resolution, for he had determined that until he heard of Alice Clifton's death, it should be held inviolate. Of this fact he was still unassured, the company so pressed upon him; besides which, the letter itself was so sacred, that he would not if he could, have opened it before so many indifferent eyes; he therefore walked forward, more like a moving statue, than a living man; nor was his mind so wholly absorbed, but that his ear caught, as he passed by, occasional expressions of disappointment; while his eye glanced round upon the many faces whose anxious looks were fixed upon his own, all expressive of wonder, as to whether the result of the meeting would be vexation or delight.

The worst anticipations of Arthur Middleton were more than realized that day. On ascending the platform, whence he looked down upon a crowd of

expectant faces, he felt not only at that moment divested of a single idea, but as if he had never possessed one in his whole life. The cause he had come to advocate, what was it to him? The great and distinguished personages by whom he was surrounded, who were they? Popularity—applause—the natural triumph of having conquered prejudice, and brought others to think and feel in a manner they had never done before.—What were all these but as the air that blew past him, or the dust beneath his feet? He had no thought, no feeling, but for that one unravelled mystery—that page which was still a fearful blank, filled up at intervals, it seemed to him, with dark passages from the gloomy grave.

Impossible as it was for Arthur Middleton to speak with his accustomed eloquence under such circumstances, so familiar was the phraseology of the cause he was engaged to advocate, that he had not only begun his speech in a manner neither incoherent nor in anyway disgraceful, but had actually occupied the attention of the audience for half an hour, before he clearly discovered the humiliating fact, that a spirit of restlessness and dissatisfaction was diffusing itself among the numbers there convened. No longer was that breathless and almost startling pause perceived, before the summing-up of the evidence he had adduced to establish the truth of his assertions. Not now, as on former occasions, were fair faces discovered suffused with tears. Not now, were bright eyes fixed upon his countenance, whose very light seemed to throw a lustre of their own upon all he said. Instead of these strong evidences of deep and living interest, there was an increasing unsettlement among the fair sex in particular. Ladies lent each other their fans and scent-bottles, and some even encouraged a faintness, which did not come so as to furnish them with a plea for retiring altogether from the scene. Watches were also taken out, and referred to with apparent anxiety; while yawns were detected here and there, not only in their suppressed and

abortive state, but in that full stage of maturity, which sets at defiance all concealment.

Alas for the popular speaker; who, in the midst of his oration, is made sensible of all this! And Arthur was one to feel it in the extreme. He knew, too, what would have given him nerve to dash as it were with one bold effort into this sea of difficulties, and overcome them wave by wave; yet he repented not. He was not only firm in act, but firm in purpose, and in thought; and he retired from the platform that night—to meet the tender solicitude of his friends on his behalf, and to hear the half-suppressed murmurs of disappointment, which seemed to float like a malignant air in the very atmosphere he breathed—determined, that come what might, he would be true in that one point, on which he had secretly pledged himself to her, who for anything he knew to the contrary, might already be numbered among the spirits of the blest.

Not until he reached his own room that night, did Arthur Middleton break the seal of his letter. He could have done it before, but dreaded the state of mind into which he might be plunged by its contents. Such, however, was the intelligence that letter contained, that it would have been well for the credit of his eloquence, had he made himself acquainted with it before. The black seal which had occasioned him such fearful anticipations was only the badge of the sorrow and the loss which the writer had herself experienced. Alice Clifton was better, decidedly better—so much so, that it was supposed she might, with great care, be able in a few weeks to bear the change to a more distant and congenial climate.

"I will see her before she leaves England!" exclaimed Arthur, after he had read the letter for the third or fourth time; and this one resolution, added to the cheering intelligence he had received, would have given him at that moment feeling, and strength, and eloquence, and nerve, to have addressed, and

riveted the attention, of a multitude extending to the utmost boundary of the space his clear and musical voice was wont to fill.

Many days had not elapsed before Arthur put in practice his determination of seeing Alice Clifton, but his heart failed him as to the chief object of his visit, when he saw how far she was yet from that stage of convalescence to which, in his sanguine imagination, she had already been restored. Arthur was capable of rashness, but to have acted with indelicacy or want of feeling would have been foreign to his nature; it was not possible, therefore, under present circumstances, for him to speak as he had intended, of the real nature of his feelings. Yet to allow Alice to go abroad, perhaps for years, himself so fully occupied and so widely separated from any path she was likely to pursue, without giving her some idea of the hold she had upon his affections, seemed altogether impossible. And so the subject grew between them unpremeditated, as it does on such occasions, when, out of the very fulness of the heart, the mouth gives utterance to the pure and simple truth. And beautiful and touching is the truth when thus developed, springing like a sweet flower out of the soil which might have long concealed the precious germe, but for the harmonious combination of light, and dew, and genial airs, which forced it into life.

And sad yet sweet it was to see that sensitive and deep-souled woman, refined by her long suffering into an existence scarcely more or less than spiritual, her hectic color alternating with marble paleness on her hollow cheek, her tears and her smiles chasing back each other to their different fountains—all that was human in her nature yielding to the irresistible conviction that she was beloved, and consequently clinging (oh, how fondly!) to a world in which love is too often but a snare—all that was purified, all that was regenerated, all that was devoted with single purpose to the interests of the world to come,

bearing her at one moment high above the bondage of every earthly tie—at the next, convincing her that from the affectionate and soothing intercourse of human fellowship she must in a great measure be shut out. And, strange to say, that with the true weakness of a woman, the heart of Alice Clifton yearned over this exclusion, as if earth was too full of happiness to leave, or as if she herself was too young to die.

It was but for a moment, however, a short but troubled moment, that those emotions contended for mastery in her mind. With a strong and sudden effort, she roused herself; and, holding out her hand to Arthur, she implored him to leave her, and to leave her soon.

"The more I am capable of feeling," she said, "the more it is my bounden duty to check those feelings in their earliest stage, which might involve the happiness of another with my own. It is enough for a poor frail mortal to be kept suspended between life and death, as I have been of late. It would be cruel to make this world more dear to one whose thoughts should be of leaving it for ever. The kindest thing you can now do, is to separate yourself from me. I will not talk in the usual way of friendship, and of brotherly and sisterly intercourse. You will hear of me from our mutual friend; and whether I live or die, I will be no tie to you. Farewell, then. When you think of me, think also of some things I said to you, before our acquaintance assumed its present character."

CHAPTER VII.

Arthur Middleton lost much of the enjoyment he had once experienced in public applause when Alice Clifton left her native country, which she did a few weeks after the interview already described. He lost also some degree of the interest he had once felt in almost all the subjects which had previously occupied his attention; but he did not lose with this his power of commanding the attention of others. Never, except on the occasion of the unopened letter, did his public exertions produce absolute disappointment; for he soon found that there is a deeper and more spirit-stirring excitement in the simple advocacy of a good cause, than was ever yet the consequence of mere animal stimulation. He was therefore true to the rule of life his friend had recommended, and never had occasion to repent of its strictness or severity; for if on one occasion he felt less animation, less fire, or less "tumult in his veins," on a thousand he felt less exhaustion and less depression than before. Thus his spirits were more equable, his powers both of mind and body were more his own, while his spiritual life was more vigorous and intense in all its purposes and all its views.

It was on a pleasant summer's evening that Arthur Middleton, having come on a visit to his father, walked over to Fearnfield to see his sister Rose, for the first time after her marriage and settlement there. There is always a satisfaction in seeing a young female relative provided for, and protected for life, which gives cheerfulness to the anticipations with

which we meet them for the first time under these auspicious circumstances.

Rose had not been prepared to expect her brother on that particular day, and therefore it was not owing to any want of hospitality in her that she did not meet him at the door; but still he thought her long in coming, as he sat in the old parlor alone, picturing to himself the bright vision he should see, when, smiling a sister's welcome, she would receive him as a guest in her own house. And Rose did smile when she entered; and she was dressed with so much taste and elegance, that the blending of lace and ribands, with pink flowers, and light gauze, made up altogether such a picture of prettiness, that he scarcely noticed how soon the smile had faded away upon her lips, or the bloom upon her cheeks had given place to the roses by which they were surrounded.

There is sometimes a strange blank between relatives, and even friends, who have not met for a long time, each wishing to look into the mind of the other before they speak, yet each feeling the necessity of saying something, without knowing what. Rose had an ease of manner, and facility of expression, which surmounted this difficulty, by substituting commonplace for the familiar conversation of a brother and a sister who had subjects of deep interest to discuss; yet, pleasantly as she might have made the time pass away, had they been mere acquaintance, met for a morning's call, Arthur felt the coldness of the blank, the rigidity by which he was thus set at a distance, more than if her manner had conveyed an absolute repulse.

"I suppose I shall see Austin," said he at last, rather weary of his sister's chat, which brought them no nearer than if they had not met.

"He will be in to dinner," replied Rose; and her countenance fell.

"He is very much engaged, I dare say," observed Arthur.

"Very much," said Rose, coldly; and it seemed to be a relief to both, that dinner was at that moment announced.

The master of the house now entered. His welcome, though formal, had more heart in it than that of Rose; and his conversation, always sensible and intelligent, though seldom familiar, had no forced pretension to sprightliness, and consequently was an improvement upon that to which Arthur had been listening. Still there was a blank—a fearful blank beneath their roof, around them, and at their very board, such as never did, and never could exist, where two hearts so closely united beat in unison together; and Arthur looked from one to the other, and thought, "If this be love, after its utmost wishes are attained, better a thousand times to pine to the end of life under a privation which inflicts but comparative and imaginary pain."

Nor was that indescribable blank, which Arthur experienced, the only evidence he had that everything was not right in the domestic establishment at Fearnfield. It was not only that points of union were wanting, but there were points of difference growing up into form and substance, like weeds from bitter roots, shooting forth, and threatening to overspread the garden, whose sickly flowers were drooping, and giving place on every hand to their formidable foes. More especially, when the strict rule of the house with respect to abstinence was discussed, the fire of hidden resentment flashed from the eye of Rose, as, taking advantage of the presence of a third person, she ventured to throw *at* her husband some of those bitter and irritating taunts which the unsubdued temper of woman is but too ready to supply; and let her powers be ever so weak in other respects, here she is strong; and hence, from this quiver of poisoned arrows, she is able to wound, and not unfrequently to triumph in the enjoyment of an ignoble victory.

"I am afraid my sister's sentiments are not ex-

actly in accordance with ours," said Arthur, when Rose had left the table; but he soon found that his new relative was not a man whose private feelings or whose household arrangements were to be interfered with. The countenance of Austin Elliot grew dark, the expression of his face contracted and absorbed; and if he did not exactly say, "Whatever your sister may think and feel, she is my wife," his manner implied, that as such, she was a part of himself, and therefore not to be made the subject of familiar remark.

Altogether, it may easily be supposed that Arthur's visit to Fearnfield was not the most social or enlivening; yet, like many other visits of the same kind, so little of a definite character had actually transpired, that when he reached home that evening, he could only speak of "poor" Rose, without being able to say why he made use of that expression. Indeed, every one did the same—every one spoke of "poor" Rose with an indefinite sense of pity, which might perhaps with equal justice have been bestowed upon the partner of her fate.

Poor Rose! she had married, as many young ladies do, expecting to be more her own mistress than she could be in her father's house—expecting to be of more consequence, to dress more, to be more thought of, and to have her caprices more indulged; while at the same time she hoped to escape many causes of irritation and annoyance which she believed to be peculiar to the situation of unmarried women; and, above all, she should escape all liability of incurring, what, in her green ideas, was the foulest stigma to a respectable female—that of being an old maid. Oh! noble concatenation of motives for doing that which might seal, by one irrevocable act, the happiness of herself and others for time and for eternity!

Rose had not been a married woman many days, before she began to discover her mistake. Her father had told her in the most earnest manner of the

importance of the step she was taking. Her mother had warned her, with tears, that human happiness is not to be played with after marriage, whatever it may be before; but she would neither listen nor believe. It was her determination to make the experiment for herself; and as her choice was in all respects unexceptionable, it became the duty of her friends to think and to hope for the best.

"Poor dear!" said Mrs. Middleton to her husband, after her first confidential interview with Rose as the mistress of Fearnfield; "I am afraid she has bound herself to a hard lot. She tells me that Austin has never relaxed the strictness of his rule with regard to abstinence, and does not intend to do so, come what may. Now, you know, my dear, as well as I do, that this will never do for Rose; and I think, as a father, you should inquire into the matter."

"I did inquire into it," replied Mr. Middleton, "before their marriage; and, having agreed to it then, I do not see on what grounds I can interfere now."

The sense of justice which influenced the father, had, however, little to do with the feelings of the mother on this occasion. And the bare fact that her daughter, in her seasons of weariness and exhaustion, had not so much as a glass of her mother's home-made wine to comfort her, brought tears into the fond eyes of her who had never been able to look unmoved upon her children's suffering or privation.

It was a melancholy consolation too, to the daughter, to treasure up and detail to her listening parent, all the different items of her conjugal distress, until at last, she so wrought upon her mother's tender heart, that measures were concerted between them for supplying the necessary support by private means, from Mr. Middleton's own store.

Little did the anxious mother know what she was

really doing, by this indiscreet and inconsiderate act. To meddle in the affairs of married people is always dangerous, but to meddle in such a way, was like throwing open the gates of a citadel to an acknowledged enemy, and leaving it to his own choice whether he would enter or not. Yet all this was done by the kindly-intentioned mother with the most profound belief that she was rendering a service to her child; and that if the husband could be so hard-hearted as to deny to so young and lovely a wife the common means of sustenance and strength, it was the positive duty of a mother, of one who could enter into fellow-feeling with her child, to render those offices of kindness which were denied elsewhere.

For some time this system went on without any apparent evil consequences. The young wife had her fits of bitter weeping; but she had also her fits of cheerfulness, in which she appeared to care little for the trials which at other times she contemplated as almost overwhelming. She was pleased too with her bridal dresses, and with the court that was paid to her as a married woman; and though not quite so happy as she expected, she supposed she should get on very well after she and her husband had learned to understand each other a little better.

But, alas! how should two such individuals ever understand each other? How should half those who take upon themselves the marriage-vow, understand each other? The thing would be impossible even if they tried, and to try seems to be the last effort they either of them think of making. No: they persist until it is too late, in each believing the other to be what inclination pictures; and that union which, of all others, ought to have truth for its foundation, is too frequently preceded by a system of self-deception as blind as it is fatal. Happy, thrice happy they, whose conduct and experience form the exceptions to this rule!

It may easily be supposed, from what has been said of Rose Middleton, that she was naturally dis-

posed to complain of every little grievance, to speak out with girlish impetuosity, and to keep no trouble concealed within her own bosom, the burden of which could by any possibility be transmitted to another. The cold answers, however, which she received from her husband on these occasions, the indifferent "indeed!" and the averted look, with which he was wont to receive the intelligence of a spoiled riband, a cut finger, a perpetual headache, and, above all, a feeling of indescribable depression, although it could not stop the fresh flow of these habitual complainings, had the effect of diverting them from the channel which a matrimonial connexion is generally expected to supply.

"I can not tell you how wretched I have been feeling all day," said Rose to her husband one evening. "I am almost sure something is going to happen. Such a weight—such a sense of depression—such a sinking! Indeed I can not describe to you how I feel."

"You had better not attempt to describe it," said Austin, coldly, as he walked to the window to look at his sheep.

This and much more of the same blank treatment which Rose was accustomed to receive, was of a nature not to be communicated even to her mother. In her own language, it might be said, that she could not describe it. It was to be felt, rather than spoken of; and to be wept over with bitter tears by a weak disappointed girl, whose very heart appeared, for the first time since it began to beat, to be awakened into actual life by the very chill which seemed more likely to have stopped its pulsations for ever. Yes, Rose began at last to know by her capability of suffering, that she had feelings to which she had hitherto been a stranger; and in proportion as she imagined herself slighted and contemned, her young heart ached for that confidence from which she believed it was her doom to be shut out. Thus, though she complained to her mother, she never did so with-

out afterward despising herself for the meanness and the treachery of having spoken against her husband; and every time he spoke to her kindly, and smiled upon her with that peculiar look of cordial feeling which his countenance occasionally wore, she inwardly resolved, that, let her grief be what it might, she never would give utterance to a thought disparaging to his character again.

The human mind, like a plant beneath the operations of the spade, sometimes expands under its own sufferings; and it was so with Rose, that while conscious of doing wrong, she was equally conscious of more pain than she had ever before experienced from this conviction, and with the pain arose more compunction that it was so richly deserved.

Disappointed, humbled, and sometimes worse than solitary, Rose was occasionally wrought up to a determination to throw herself and her faults upon the forgiveness of her husband, by telling him all that she had ever done in secret, contrary to his will; but then the thought that after such confession she must be prepared to make her will subservient to his, that she must never from that time deceive him again, but submit in all things to the law against which her soul rebelled—these were the calculations which held her back, and which directed her again and again to those forbidden means, by which she endeavored to drown her convictions, and fortify herself against the condemnation of her own heart.

Still she thought she might reason with him; and with this intention she one day introduced the subject, with the hope of convincing him, that she could not live, that she actually could not exist, without the support of wine.

"Only try it, my dear," said her husband. "All I ask of you is to try it for my sake—for the sake of your own good faith, as you promised me that you would, before you consented to be my wife. Only try it fairly, and if your health really fails under it, do you believe I could see you suffer, and not be

willing to offer you even that remedy myself? I am aware you are enduring a severe trial; I am not so great a stranger to your sufferings as I seem. All I ask of you is, to be true to yourself and me; and to persevere for three months longer. At the expiration of that time, it will be proved whether your health has been injured or not. I think you are as well as before you married; are you not, Rose?"

"I think I should be as well," replied Rose with much embarrassment, "if—if," and she seemed unable to finish the sentence she would have uttered.

"If you were as happy, I suppose you mean," said her husband; and he bit his lip, and walked to another part of the room.

He soon turned round, however, and fixing his keen eyes upon his humbled and weeping wife—"It is time you should know," said he, "if you have not already made the discovery for yourself, that you are not the only disappointed person in our union. Oh, Rose! I had such visions of domestic happiness!—But never mind that now. You were young, and I was the most to blame, for I ought to have been wiser. You think me indifferent, and perhaps unkind; but know this from one who is not apt to say more than he feels, that you have not a moment of grief in which I do not suffer with you; and if I thought that, by restoring you to your father's family, I should restore you to peace and happiness, there is no reproach the world could heap upon me, which I would not cheerfully bear for your sake."

"Has it come to this?" said Rose to herself, for the first time appalled at the reality of her situation; but beyond one appealing look, with which she answered the fixed and mournful gaze of her husband, she had no reply except her tears.

"I am not versed in women's varying moods," he went on to say. "I repeat what I have already said, that truth is all I ask of you—truth toward yourself and me, and faithfulness in the trial you are making for my sake. I dwell much upon this, be-

cause, if I had pledged myself to make a similar experiment for you, and to test a point which in your opinion was of great importance, I should feel bound to make it cheerfully, without reluctance, and without reserve, or else I could not regard the experiment as fairly made; for with an unwilling mind, and lingering thoughts, which pine after some imaginary good we have relinquished, it is not very probable that we should be able to ascertain whether it was really the good we had supposed, or whether the substitute adopted was equal to the indulgence resigned."

"But I have no substitute," murmured Rose.

"Alas! no," said her husband, "for my society, my truth, my affection, seem to have lost their value."

"If I thought," said Rose, looking up with more confidence, "if I thought you had really the affection for me you once professed—"

"You would make this sacrifice cheerfully, and entirely?"

The countenance of the speaker, as he uttered these words, was so full of earnest expression, as if his whole life depended upon the answer he might receive, that Rose shrunk back abashed, and covered her face with both her hands, knowing but too well how incompetent she was to promise all that was desired.

Austin said no more. He remained some time in silence in the same apartment; but they both fell back into their accustomed reserve, and neither understood better than before what was passing in the mind of the other.

It is a mistaken notion that women suffer more than men from the consequences of ill-assorted marriage; that they suffer more acutely, is evident from their incapability of concealing what is rankling in their feelings; but the blight which falls upon the heart of man from disappointment here, is more universal, and more deep. Besides which, woman re-

tains, through all, the invaluable faculty of being able to amuse herself with trifles. She has a thousand outlets, too, for feeling on other subjects, which drain away some portion of this otherwise overwhelming flood; but man stands alone—neither seeking others, nor sought himself—beneath the branches of the deadly upas, where the dew falls not, nor flower, nor leaf, nor blade of grass, give beauty or verdure to the scene.

It is a mistaken notion, too, that strong minds demand less of our sympathy than weak. The character which is strong in power, is strong in suffering; and the shrinking sensitiveness of a small spirit, bears as little proportion to the agonizing throes of a gigantic soul, as the flutter of the dying butterfly to the fall of the wounded eagle, when the shadow of its broken pinion darkens the mountain-side like that of a passing cloud.

Without purpose, and without effort, save to accomplish the gratification of the present moment, the wife we have been describing sunk into that state of restless and petulant despair, in which the wounded spirit frets against opposition, without daring in its turn to oppose. Too self-willed to submit, and too capricious to effect what she really wished, by any settled plan, Rose just managed to exist from day to day, without even the amusement which her domestic affairs might have afforded her; for it had been agreed between her mother and her husband, that, in order to spare her any unnecessary trouble, Mrs. Clement should be invited to retain her oversight and care of the household at Fearnfield; and such was the acknowledged skill and discipline she had exercised in that establishment for many years, that little hope could have been entertained of the same order and economy being maintained by a younger and less experienced mistress.

Thus Rose was only the nominal mistress of her husband's house, and although treated with as much respect by all parties as if she had really stood at

the head of all the domestic arrangements there, she was comparatively unoccupied, and left to be the prey of her own thoughts; and thought being a faculty she had never learned to control, she was not rendered the more happy by ascertaining, for the first time in her life, what may be the extent of its exercise, and the effect of its development, under circumstances least favorable to enjoyment.

If there be any individual closely connected with us, whom we intentionally disoblige, and deliberately deceive, that individual is sure to become, to a certain extent, the object of our dislike; and if this be true of our earthly relations, how much more is it true of that relation between the soul and its Maker, which is the foundation either of our highest happiness, or our deepest condemnation!

The misguided and ill-judging wife we have been attempting to describe, experienced the force of this law of our nature in its fullest extent. She had little cause of serious complaint against her husband, so scrupulous was he in all things to act toward her in strict accordance with what he believed to be his duty; yet so powerful were the habits she was indulging in their natural effect of poisoning the springs of affection, that instead of meeting him on his return home with the warmth and cordiality of a faithful wife, she too often shrunk away like one abashed, from his presence; and when she felt, as she often did, that his sad and earnest gaze was fixed upon her face, she would sometimes blush with a secret dread lest he should read the guilty secret of her soul. For guilty it was, and such she felt it to be, to suffer him to continue to trust her on a point on which she knew that she was not trustworthy. Nor was this all: one deception, systematically practised, is sure to involve us in the practice of others; and a negative falsehood can only be effectually acted out by the support of those which are positive.

"What a comfort it is," said Austin Elliot one stormy winter's evening, to his wife; "what a com-

fort it is to come home to such a fireside as mine, when one has been riding for hours in the pelting rain! And now, Rose, let me try for once in my life to make you comfortable too."

Rose looked up with one of her sweetest smiles, for her heart was really touched by this unexpected kindness; and drawing her chair a little nearer to the fire, she prepared her husband's tea with more than her accustomed care, to render it agreeable. Nay, she even helped him to draw off the damp shawl from around his neck, and with her own hands placed his slippers beside the fire, that they might be ready for his use; and all the time, while the wind howled fearfully around their dwelling, and the rain fell in splashing torrents against the window-shutters, their evening fire burned so brightly, and the old parlor at Fearnfield presented so inviting an appearance, that a mere looker-on would have supposed the two who sat beside that glowing hearth, were among the happiest of human beings.

"My poor Rose," said Austin, "I have inflicted upon you a long and severe trial, but you will always enjoy the consciousness of having borne it faithfully. Nay, do not turn away, nor think me insensible to your altered state. I see that the bloom has vanished from your cheeks—I see that you are feeble, nervous, and often so exhausted and weary, that in very pity I have more than once been tempted to offer you with my own hand the forbidden draught. The time has now come which was to form the limit of your trial; and in your case, I must confess, that I think it has failed. One thing, however, I want, to confirm my convictions, I want your clear and candid testimony to this fact. Tell me then, dear Rose, and tell me freely us you would speak to one whose happiness was bound up in yours—tell me whether you think you are really better, or worse, for pursuing my system of abstinence?"

Rose bent down her head, and the brightest of the burning embers upon which she tried to look, was

scarcely brighter or more burning that the blush of shame which glowed upon her cheek.

"Why will you not be candid with me?" asked Austin in his kindest tone; and taking her hand, he looked earnestly into her face with those deep and serious eyes, which seemed incapable of beholding anything but truth.

"My own Rose," said he again, "let us be sincere with each other on this subject at least. You have nothing—you can have nothing to fear. Would you not like to have the restriction, which I know you have felt to be oppressive, taken away from you?"

"Yes," said Rose, with a voice so faint as scarcely to be audible.

"Then tell me the honest truth: I think I see it all myself, but I may be mistaken—would that I could do anything to make us from this hour more united in heart and in purpose! It is a hard thing for me to give up this my favorite point; yet, for your sake, I do it so cheerfully, that you ought to reward me by being cheerful and frank in return. To-morrow, Rose, you shall begin to live as other people do. I have been to the distance of ten miles, to order in the wine which your mother thinks best for you, because I did not like to order it where I was known, and where those with whom I have associated myself in this cause might feel scandalized by what I did. To-morrow, then, you will be more happy; will you not? dear Rose, promise me that, or I shall be grievously disappointed."

This interview, like many others between Austin Elliot and his wife, passed over without bringing that entire renunciation of selfish purpose, that full acknowledgment of past offences, and that clear understanding of individual feeling, which alone could have placed them on a happier footing with each other; and distance consequently grew between them, and motives were mistaken, and projects were thwarted, and each, absorbed in personal sufferings,

overlooked the trials of the other, and believed none else so miserable.

To Rose this state of things was a burden so impossible to be borne without complaining, that recourse was still had to the untiring ear of her fond and indulgent mother, who, naturally leaning to the interests of her child, scrupled not to express her sense of the austerity with which she was treated, in language which not unfrequently extorted from Rose something like a recantation of her first statement, in the hope of vindicating her husband from suspicions, which she knew in her heart he did not deserve. It is true, she was now released from that stern law which she had felt to be so grievous; but instead of enjoying the indulgence generously granted her, she could not even partake of it in the presence of her husband; and thus, unsuspicious as he was of any private means of gratification, she obtained with him the credit of a voluntary abstinence, for which he admired and commended her more than he had ever done before. All this, however, brought little satisfaction to the undeserving object of his approval; and the cold and repulsive manner in which his commendations were received, could not fail in time to chill the heart whence they flowed.

"I do not think," said Rose to herself one day, as she turned from her father's door to walk to her own home, after a long consultation with her mother, "I do not think there is any poor creature so miserable as I am," and yet her path lay among the humblest of a number of mean-looking cottages which formed the outskirts of the town in which her father lived.

This conclusion had scarcely taken possession of her mind, when her attention was attracted by the unusually low courtesy of a poor woman, who had placed herself on the footpath, evidently with the intention of arresting the progress of Rose.

"You will pardon me, ma'am," said the woman,

"I dare say, if I take the liberty of speaking to you for a few moments about a poor lady who is now my lodger. She is not unknown to you, at least to Mr Middleton; and I fear, poor thing, I very much fear she is drawing near her last."

"Had I not better go back and tell my father?' said Rose.

"If you would be so good," replied the woman, "for I have nobody to leave, and her suffering grows heavier every moment."

Rose hastened back as requested, and lost no time in bringing her father to the scene of mortal agony—for such indeed it was—though the increased age and infirmity of Mr. Middleton rendered him more tardy than his kind heart would have prompted, had its feelings alone been consulted. Rose also entered the cottage; for, habitual as it was to her to shrink from everything calculated to excite painful interest, she could not in common kindness refuse to be her father's companion on such an errand; more especially, as during the last few months it had become necessary for him to have the assistance of an arm to lean upon, whenever he ventured upon a walk of any considerable length. Rose therefore found herself very reluctantly compelled not only to enter the cottage, but actually to ascend the stairs with her father; and not even when she heard the laborious breathings of the sufferer, and the frequent moans which escaped from her burning lips, could she leave her father to struggle alone with the feelings which threatened to overpower his feeble frame.

With that sudden consciousness which belongs to a high state of feverish excitement, the patient started from her pillow at the sound of their steps, and recognising in an instant the faithful minister, whose counsels she had in past years too often rejected, she stretched out her parched and quivering hand, which he hesitated not to take as kindly as if she had been a more grateful recipient of his former warnings.

"It has all come true!" she exclaimed, with the most distinct recollection of interviews which had not taken place for years; "all that you told me has come true, and more, and worse, a thousand times."

The aged minister now endeavored to speak in tones of soothing but it would not do. "I am a dying woman!" exclaimed the sufferer, with a voice that seemed to rend the very air, "and I am lost, through that one besetment, of which you have so often warned me. I know what you would say to me," she continued, holding up her hand, as the signal for all to be silent, that she might speak on—"You would say that there is yet hope, even for me; and I know it, if I could but think—Oh! if you could cool this burning brain, and stop this rush of thought that bursts the bounds of reason!—if you could purchase for me but one quiet hour, and kneel beside me, and pray as you used to pray, when I would not hear—Oh! oh!——"

And the miserable woman fell back on her pillow, in such an agony, that the minister believing it to be her last, did kneel beside her as in former days; and though his voice was tremulous with age, and his eye was dim with tears, the words he uttered were not the less impressive, touching, and sincere.

"It is of no use," said the miserable creature, when he rose from the posture of supplication; "if your prayers could have saved me, I should never have fallen as I have done; for I know, and I knew then, that you prayed for me in your closet, even when you had ceased to visit me."

"My poor dear creature," said Mr. Middleton, addressing the patient more earnestly than he had done before, "you tell me it is too late for you to pray for yourself, yet you speak collectedly. Let us try what a little effort at composure may do."

"No, no," said Mrs. Russel—for it was no other than the widow of the neighbor who had so often sat at the minister's social board—"I may be clear

on what I do see—too clear, alas! for thought rushes upon me like a torrent, and before I can lay hold of one thing another comes to drive it away. It is as if all the wasted hours of my past life were heaped upon my soul, with each its separate burden of responsibility and guilt, and here I lie, wasted and crushed beneath. Yet one thing I must say—one thing, for your sake and that of your children, who are growing up to do what thousands are doing blindly every day. You know the habits of my husband, well-meaning man as he was, how he took innocently, and with apparent safety, what I could not partake of without danger and guilt. Besides, my mind was differently constituted from his; and while he could amuse himself with the trifles of the moment, realities of deeper import, unsanctified and unexplained, took possession of my soul, to the exclusion of all thoughts of usefulness in common things. But enough of this; you know the gulf into which I fell. It was the opinion of you, and many other of my friends, that I could save myself if I would, nay, that it was easy to do so; but what I want most to tell you now is, of that which stood chiefly in my way, besides, of course, the inclinations of my own wicked heart. My husband was addicted, in a respectable and moderate way to that indulgence, which you and all my friends would have denied to me. I do not say that in him it was wrong; but I do say, that when he sat down weary and dispirited to make himself comfortable in this way, and poured out before me what to him was a lawful draught, it was more than human nature was capable of, with that aching want which preyed upon me, to resist. Besides which—and here lies the secret of the evil—I had no more intention than he had, of taking too much; my conscience was therefore as clear as his; from the constitution of my mind and body I had greater need, if that were allowed to be a plea; and where, then, was the difference?"

"Because," said Mr. Middleton, "you having

sinned, knew that you were in danger, while he was not."

"Yes, I knew that I had sinned; but I had prayed again and again that my sin might be pardoned, and that I might sin no more. Nay, I sometimes believed that it was so; and being pardoned, did I not stand on the same footing with my husband? Yes, and with as clean lips as his, I believed myself to be drinking, what to me has proved destruction."

"What then," asked the minister, "do you believe would have saved you?"

"Humanly speaking," replied the dying woman, "I believe it would have saved me, had my husband been willing to sacrifice this indulgence for my sake; had I never seen him enjoy it, make much of it, or appear to consider it essential to his health; in short, had he said kindly, 'I see your weakness, and although I am not weak in the same way, yet, in the hope of assisting you to resist this temptation, I will cheerfully pledge myself with you to abstain from such indulgence, now and for ever, even at the risk of some slight injury to my health, and more to my social and domestic enjoyments.' Oh, sir! you are a minister of religion, and you ought to know the secret of this mode of acting; the charm there would have been in this bond of union, compared with the harsh restraint, the separate law, the shutting out as it were from those who were of ability to master themselves; and finally, the contempt, the reprobation, the utter casting out from among the holy and the pure! Oh! sir," and the wretched woman seized the arm of the minister, "while you have life—while you have influence, remember that it is for poor frail creatures like us, to help to bear each other's burdens, and that, if there is one being upon earth more pitiable than all others, it is the wretch who has learned the deadly secret of stilling the worm, whose gnawings begin on this side the grave, by perpetual recurrence to the intoxicating draught."

With these words the sufferer fell back on her pillow so completely exhausted, that Mr. Middleton and his daughter, after waiting some minutes in silence, prepared to leave the chamber; but no sooner had they turned away from the bedside, than the patient started up in all the phrensy of delirium, and calling upon them to stop, in a voice that was scarcely human; "I have one more word to say," she shrieked again and again, "one—only one: it was in your house, and at your social parties, that my husband——" but here she lost herself, and rambled off to other things, becoming in a few moments so incoherent and wild in her ravings, that it was less difficult for her friends to escape from her presence, which they did without being observed, but not without taking precautions, before they left the cottage, to have their places supplied by more suitable and efficient help.

It was in perfect silence that the father and daughter walked that day from the cottage where the dying woman lay, to Mr. Middleton's own door. Here the father stopped, and, turning round to Rose, bade her, with great earnestness, go home and fetch her husband, as he wished all his children to be with him that evening.

Struck with the solemnity of her father's manner, Rose obeyed his command without hesitation; and her father, on entering his own room, shut to the door, having first requested that he might not be intruded upon, unless by a messenger from the house of affliction, until a certain hour in the evening.

That hour arrived, and the family were assembled as usual, Arthur being at that time on a visit to his parents, and Ruth Clement also being there; for she had returned with her interesting charge to their native country, under the happiest auspices; and although the society of Ruth had become almost essential to the happiness of Alice Clifton, she had been permitted, immediately on their landing, to repair to Fearnfield, where a welcome awaited her

from all her former friends, not the less cordial because she brought with her the cheerful tidings of amended health, and the hope of a continued life of enjoyment and usefulness.

So entire on this occasion was the reunion of the minister's family, that but for the altered character of the countenances which met around his still hospitable board, it might have been supposed that Time had stayed his course, and that only months, instead of years, had rolled over the fair and the manly forms assembled there. Yes, it was indeed a reunion; for but one link had been broken in the chain of social fellowship; and though widely different had been the paths by which all had diverged from the paternal hearth, thoughts of kindness excited in early life, and affection the most sincere, had brought them back at each intermediate meeting with stronger feelings of interest, and deeper convictions that there are no friendships so warm as those which are formed in childhood or in youth.

If, however, there could have been any doubt as to the lapse of time since the early interchange of familiar acquaintance between the minister's family and their friends at Fearnfield, one glance at the venerable head of that family, would have been enough to convince the beholder of that weight of years, with no trifling burden of duty and responsibility, it had been his lot to bear. Still he was vigorous in mind, though feeble in body; and when he looked around upon his children, a smile of peculiar sweetness lighted up his countenance, to give place in a moment to an expression of the deepest concern, as he entered with great solemnity upon a description of the scene he had that day witnessed.

"And now," said he, rising up from his chair, "the object for which I have asked you to come together would be incomplete, if I did not avow to you, my children, that I have this day been convinced, for the first time in my life, of the duty which rests upon Christian professors, and upon the

ministers of religion in particular, to abstain from all appearance of evil, even in that which is no evil to us, for the sake of those to whom it is so; provided, only, this can be done without the sacrifice of principle. My children, it is late in life with me to make resolutions; these gray hairs and these withered hands are my warning that with me it may be too late; yet as He, by whom all holy desires are given, will be my help, I here pledge myself to abstain entirely, not only now, but until my dying day, from that indulgence, which to the poor sufferer now on the brink of eternity—and, alas! to how many others!—has been a root of bitterness, and a cause of spiritual death. When I look around upon society, and think how many my example in this respect may have influenced, the picture is most appalling: yet what else can I do, than repeat my pledge, that what has been, shall be no more? and I do this solemnly, and I hope with humiliation before God, simply upon the principle which influenced the apostle, when he said, 'If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no more so long as the world stands.'"

Among those who witnessed this pledge of the aged minister, there was not one more seriously affected than poor Rose.

"I never, until this moment," said she with clasped hands, "understood the principle of total abstinence before."

But her exclamations were interrupted by the sobs of Ruth Clement, who stood behind the rest, and who, struggling with her grief, came forward to add her testimony to the truth and the value of the principle itself.

"You all remember the habits of my poor brother," she began; and here there were other tears besides her own, to answer that he was indeed remembered there. "He was doubting once whether he would make a determined stand against this temptation or not, and he told me himself that a single evening spent in religious society decided him to

go on in the course which ultimately proved his ruin."

"Let us all unite with my father this evening," said Rose, "in the resolution he has made; and I will be first, since I need it most. Hear, then, my confession." And with her hands again clasped, and her eyes upraised, the penitent—the real penitent—went through, before her husband, her father, and her family, a full and unsparing confession of what had been her sin and her snare. And not until her pledge had been added to her father's, and she had returned to her husband, and buried her face on his shoulder, did she give way to the tears, which were now welcome and refreshing as dew upon a desert land.

"I, too," said Austin Elliot, as he supported his weeping wife, "have my confession to make. It is to my shame I avow, that I have endeavored to enforce my own wishes as the law of my household, without ever explaining upon what principle those wishes were founded; that I have used force, rather than reason, to bend others to my will; and that, even with my wife, authority rather than persuasion has been the means I have adopted, to induce her to unite with me in this great object. It may be some satisfaction to you all to know that I have had my punishment; but I am sure it will be a much higher satisfaction if I can induce you to believe that the wife you have committed to my trust shall for the future be associated with all my thoughts, and all my purposes, as she ever has been with all my enjoyments."

The resolution of the aged minister, although contrary to the wishes and entreaties of his wife, who devoutly believed it would be the means of shortening his precious life, was perhaps more influential upon the habits of his children than if it had been formed in earlier life, before they were either qualified to judge of the sacrifice he made, or of the necessity there was that he should practise this act of

self-denial for the sake of those who were weaker than himself.

His children, however, were not difficult to convince, or to win over to the same system of abstinence—relying, as they always had done, upon the integrity of their father's motives, and the rectitude of his principles; and though the mother still shook her head, and believed all aches and pains, from the least to the greatest, which from that hour assailed her family, to originate solely in their abstemiousness, they were, upon the whole, as healthy and as cheerful as any of their friends; and then Alice Clifton, as the wife of Arthur, was adding to their number, and Ruth Clement filled a responsible place in their household; and Rose, with her playful but innocent gayety, won a smile from her grave husband; it would have been difficult to find a more encouraging specimen of the principles of total abstinence, carried out through a united and social circle of Christian friends, than was presented by the minister's family, with him as their venerated leader at its head.

THE END.

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